JAN BRETT's
Snowy
Treasury

JAN BRETT's Snowy Treasury

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS ❤ PENGUIN YOUNG READERS GROUP

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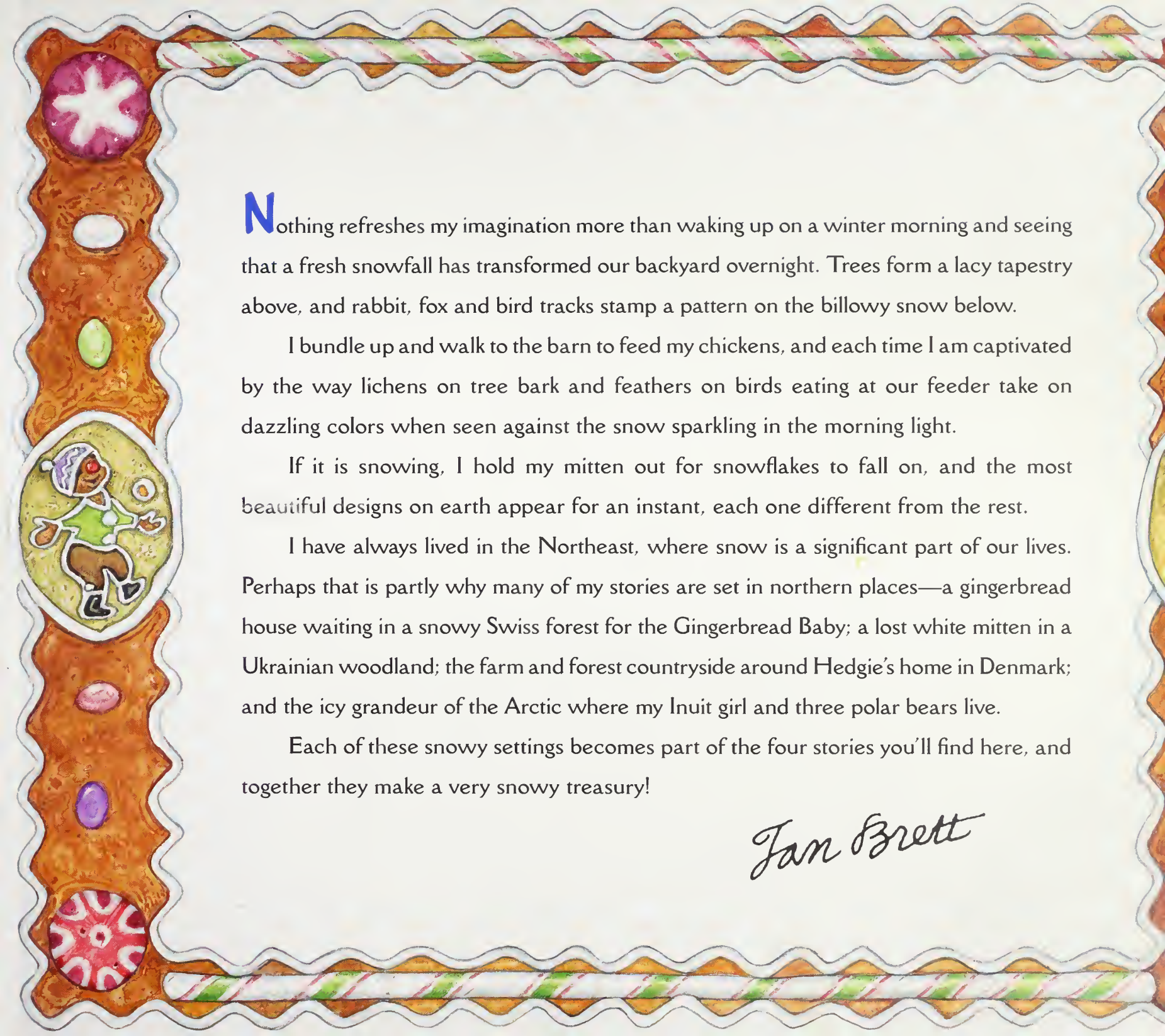

Nothing refreshes my imagination more than waking up on a winter morning and seeing that a fresh snowfall has transformed our backyard overnight. Trees form a lacy tapestry above, and rabbit, fox and bird tracks stamp a pattern on the billowy snow below.

I bundle up and walk to the barn to feed my chickens, and each time I am captivated by the way lichens on tree bark and feathers on birds eating at our feeder take on dazzling colors when seen against the snow sparkling in the morning light.

If it is snowing, I hold my mitten out for snowflakes to fall on, and the most beautiful designs on earth appear for an instant, each one different from the rest.

I have always lived in the Northeast, where snow is a significant part of our lives. Perhaps that is partly why many of my stories are set in northern places—a gingerbread house waiting in a snowy Swiss forest for the Gingerbread Baby; a lost white mitten in a Ukrainian woodland; the farm and forest countryside around Hedgie's home in Denmark; and the icy grandeur of the Arctic where my Inuit girl and three polar bears live.

Each of these snowy settings becomes part of the four stories you'll find here, and together they make a very snowy treasury!

Jan Brett

GINGERBREAD BABY

THE MITTEN

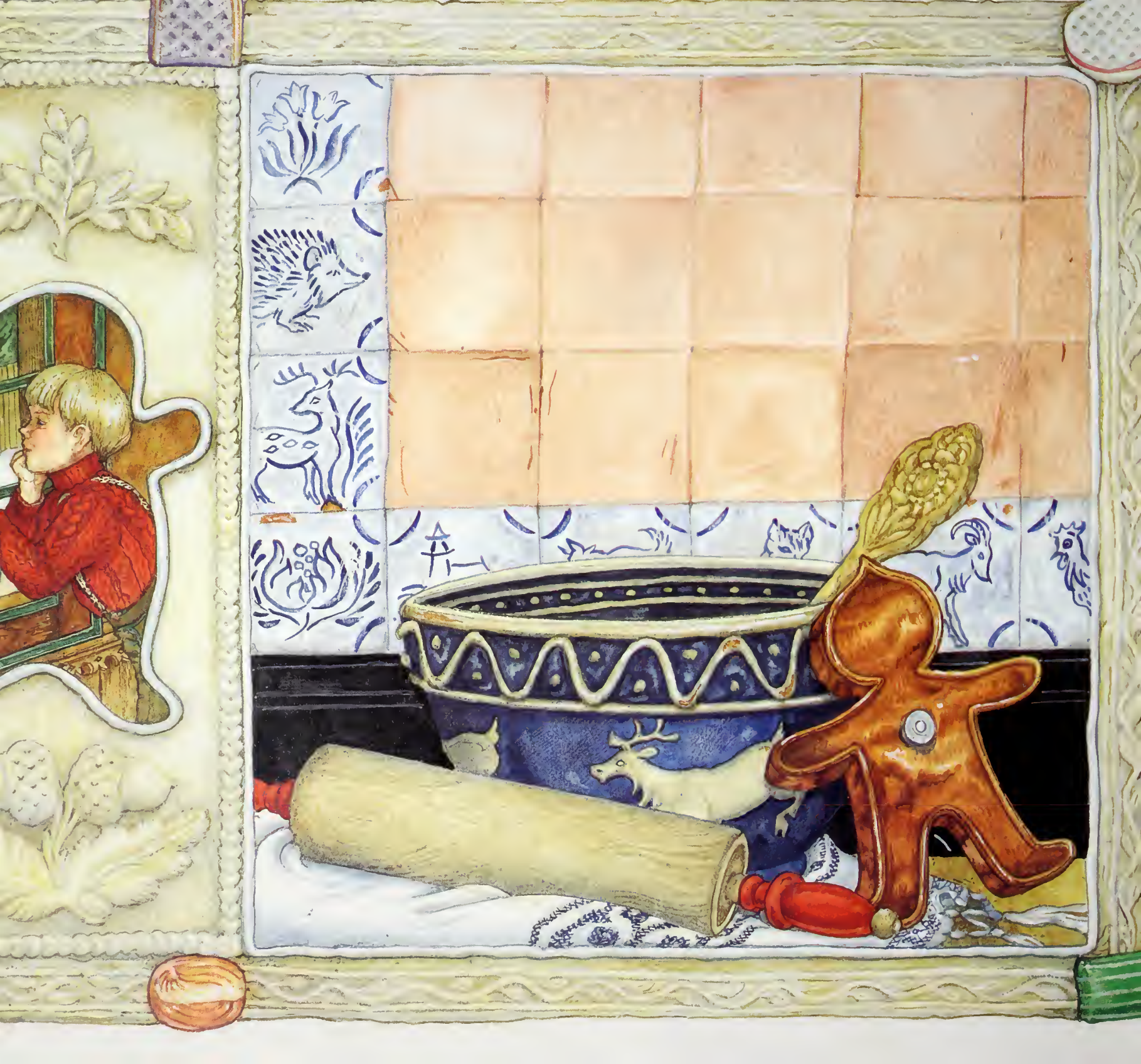
THE HAT

THE THREE SNOW BEARS

JAN BRETT
Gingerbread Baby

For Mary, Thelma, Barbara, Megan, Lia, and Martha

With thanks to Alexander Brown

Gingerbread Baby

It was cold outside. It was warm inside. *A fine day for gingerbread,* Matti thought.

Matti's mother put the big blue bowl on the table and lit the stove. Matti took down a worn-looking cookbook with old-fashioned writing on the cover. He opened it up to the page that said "Gingerbread Boy."

They measured and mixed. Matti rolled the dough into the shape of a gingerbread boy and they popped him in the oven.

Bake a full eight minutes. No more. No less. DO NOT peek, the recipe read.

Matti listened to the clock. Tick, tock, tick. One minute, two minutes, three . . . four . . . five . . . . Matti couldn't wait any longer. He opened the oven door to take a peek. Instead of a gingerbread boy, out jumped a gingerbread baby!

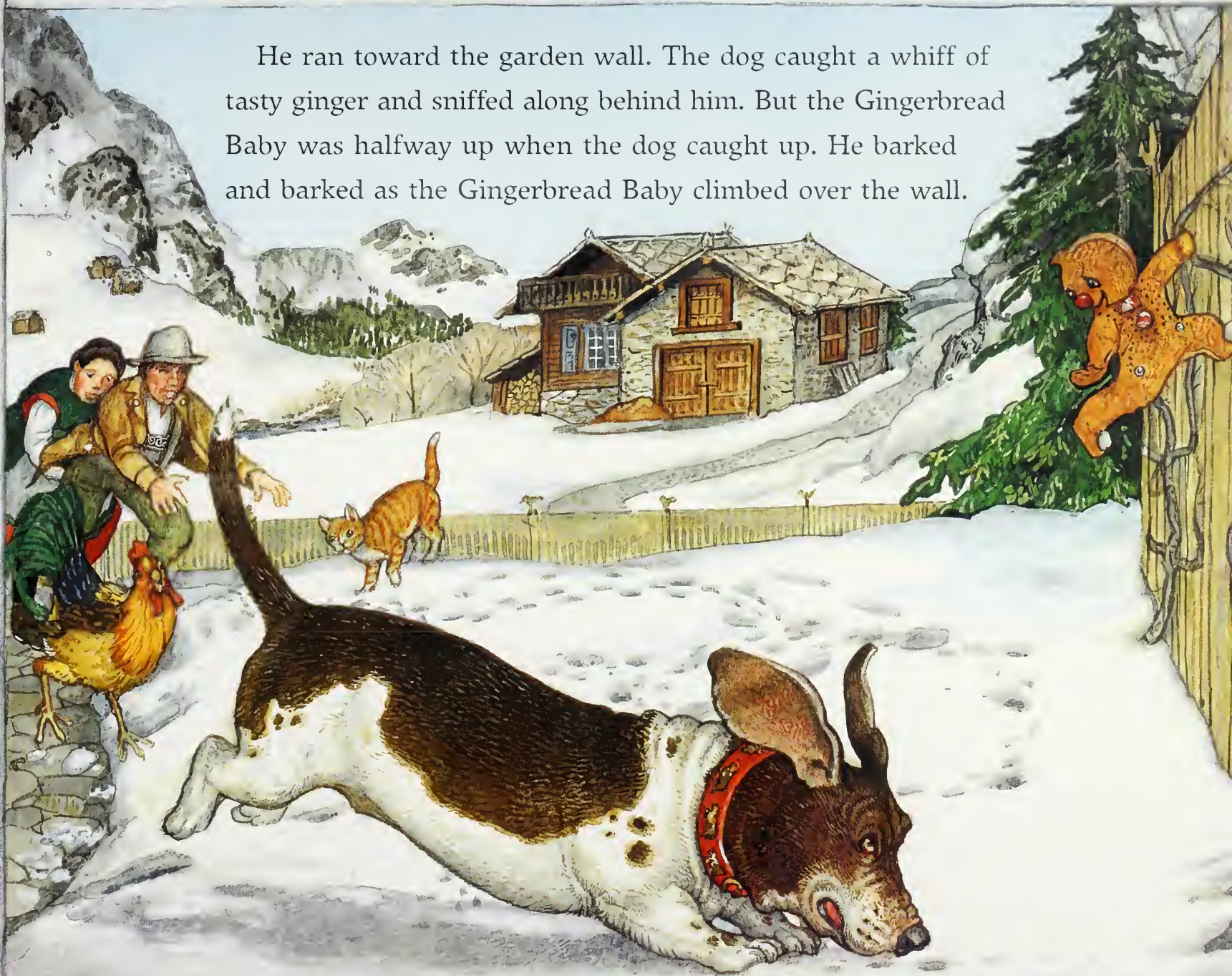
He pranced around the big blue bowl.

"I am the Gingerbread Baby,
Fresh from the pan.
If you want me,
Catch me if you can."

Matti's mother reached for the Gingerbread Baby to put him back into the oven. But he ran all around the kitchen.

The door opened and in came Matti's father. "What's that delicious smell?" he asked as the Gingerbread Baby tumbled through his legs and outside into the yard.

He ran by the tabby cat. She twitched her tail and sprang at him. They rumbled and tumbled, but the Gingerbread Baby came out on top.

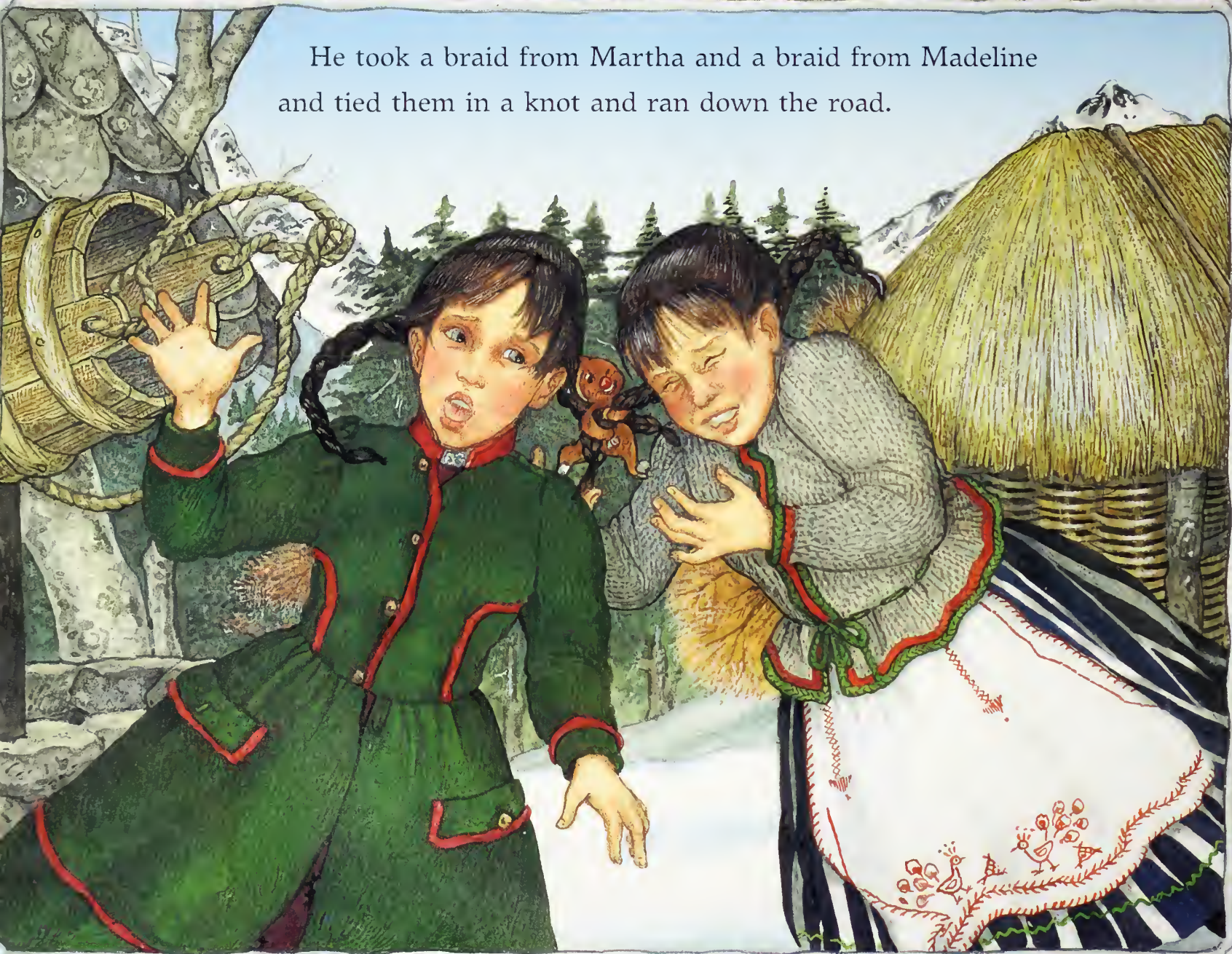
He ran toward the garden wall. The dog caught a whiff of tasty ginger and sniffed along behind him. But the Gingerbread Baby was halfway up when the dog caught up. He barked and barked as the Gingerbread Baby climbed over the wall.

Matti was still inside. He heard his mother and father yelling. He heard a cat meowing and a dog barking. And he heard the Gingerbread Baby shouting:

"Catch me if you can!"

Matti opened up the worn-looking cookbook for the second time.

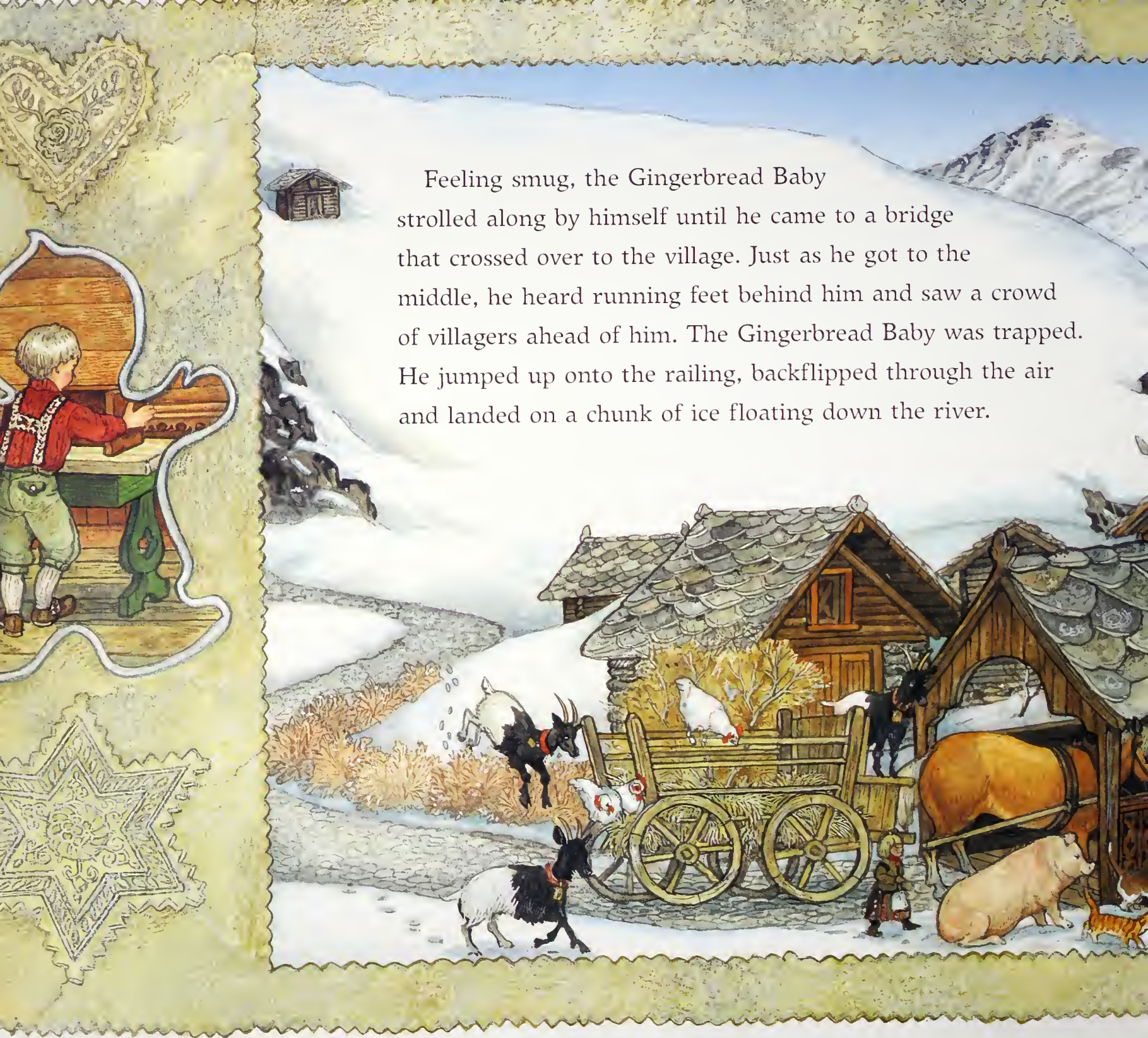
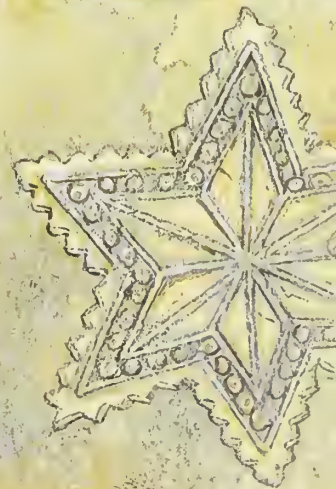
Meanwhile the Gingerbread Baby wheeled on down the path and into the barn. The goats looked up as he somersaulted across their backs. The last one tried to catch him, but the Gingerbread Baby was too fast.

Martha and Madeline were standing by the well when the Gingerbread Baby stopped to take a drink. They looked at each other and winked. Martha started to talk to him while Madeline tiptoed up behind him with the bucket. But they couldn't fool that Gingerbread Baby.

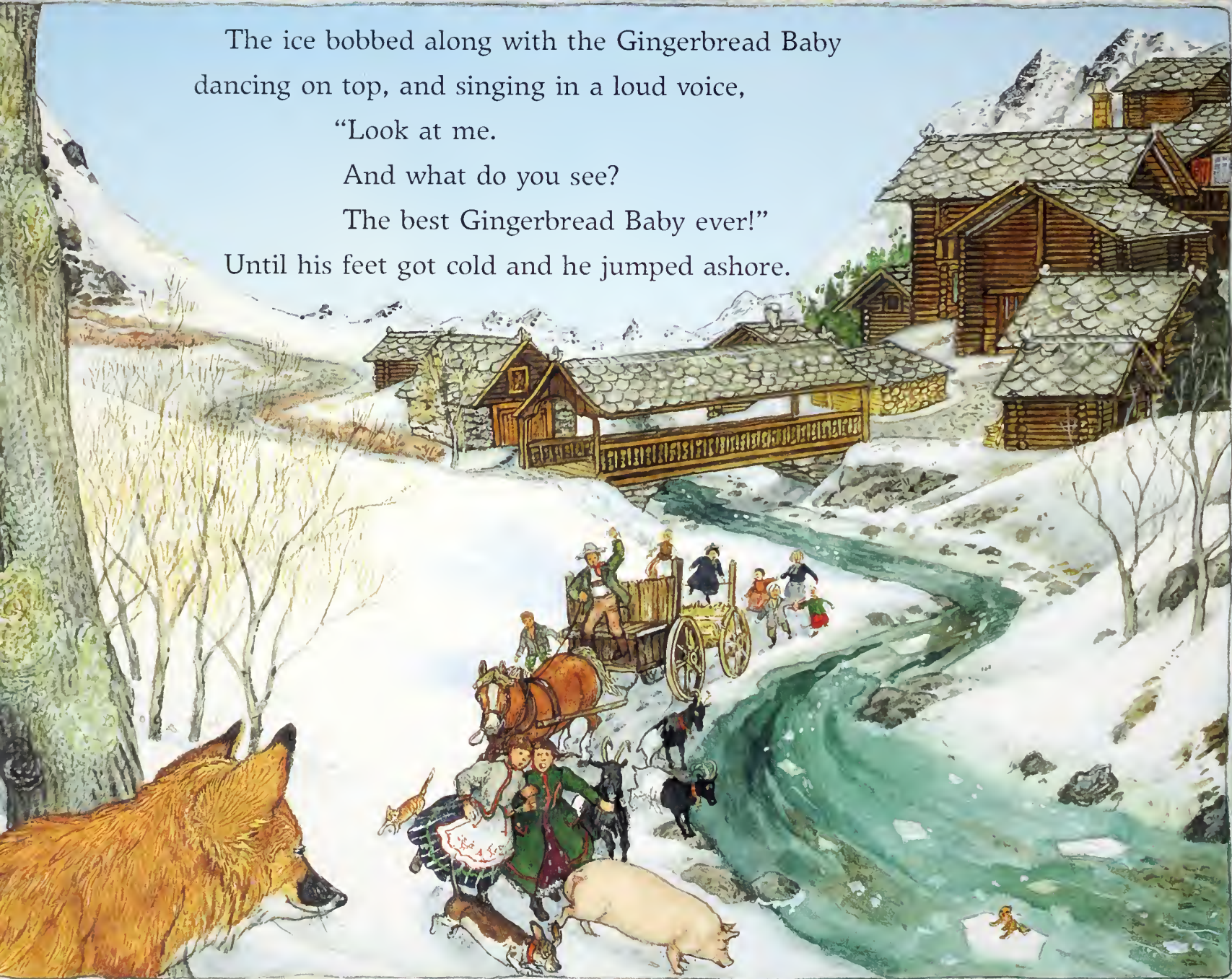
He took a braid from Martha and a braid from Madeline and tied them in a knot and ran down the road.

Back in the house, Matti stirred, mixed and rolled the dough. He shaped it, put it in a pan and into the oven. Tick, tock, tick. Eight long minutes. This time he didn't peek. "I will catch him if I can," Matti said to himself.

As he was bouncing along, the Gingerbread Baby saw a farm wagon just ahead. He jumped in and settled down for the ride next to a mama pig. The smell of gingerbread was too much for her. She tossed him high in the air, closed her eyes and opened her mouth. But the Gingerbread Baby twisted in the air and came down hard on her porky snout.

"I am the Gingerbread Baby.
Too quick for the mother and the father,
Too fast for the cat, the dog, the goats,
Too clever for Martha and Madeline,
Too smart for the mama pig.
Who's left? Catch me if you can!"

Feeling smug, the Gingerbread Baby strolled along by himself until he came to a bridge that crossed over to the village. Just as he got to the middle, he heard running feet behind him and saw a crowd of villagers ahead of him. The Gingerbread Baby was trapped. He jumped up onto the railing, backflipped through the air and landed on a chunk of ice floating down the river.

The ice bobbed along with the Gingerbread Baby dancing on top, and singing in a loud voice,

"Look at me.
And what do you see?
The best Gingerbread Baby ever!"

Until his feet got cold and he jumped ashore.

Who was that watching from the trees? It was the fox. He crept up behind the Gingerbread Baby, ready to eat him up. But the fox couldn't help himself, and he licked his chops. Smack! Smack! The Gingerbread Baby heard him and ran as fast as he could.

Just when the fox was catching up, the Gingerbread Baby saw the milk and cheese man with his can of milk. *The perfect hiding place,* he thought. He lifted the lid and lowered himself inside. He was so pleased that he sang at the top of his gingerbread voice,

"Ha, ha! Hee, hee!
You'll never find me.
I'm the Gingerbread Baby.
Catch me if you can!"

The milk and cheese man heard the Gingerbread Baby's voice. "Who is meddling with my milk!" he shouted and lifted the lid. But the Gingerbread Baby was ready. He jumped up and tweaked his nose.

Now the milk and cheese man, the fox, the villagers, the mama pig, Martha and Madeline, the bleating goats, the barking dog, the meowing cat, the father and the mother were all after the Gingerbread Baby and getting closer.

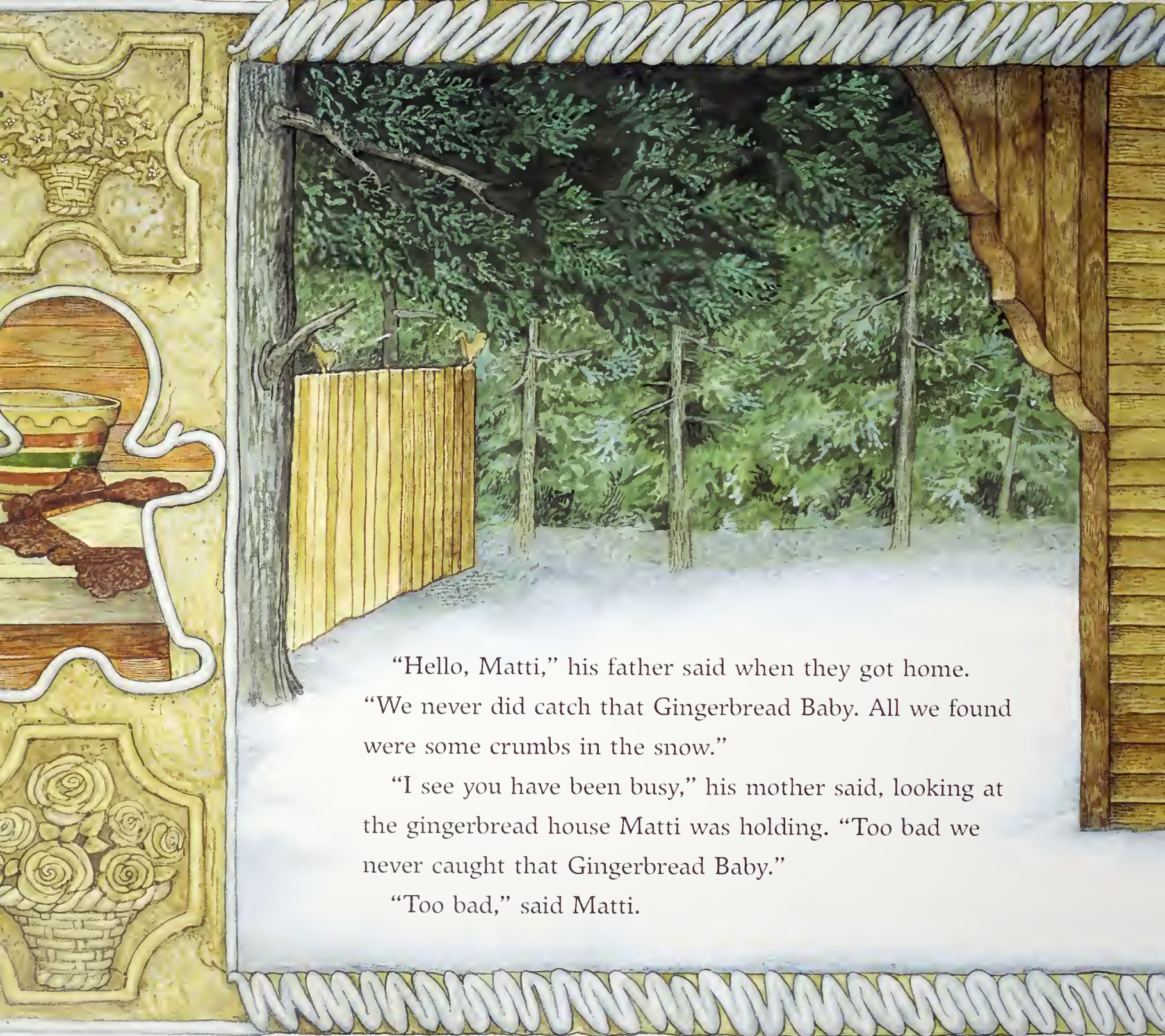
And he knew it.

The brash baby was not as peppy and proud as he had been. He sniffed a familiar smell and followed his nose into the woods.

He couldn't believe what he saw. There in the middle of a clearing was a gingerbread house, frosted with sugar, covered with candy, and doors with peppermint handles wide open. The Gingerbread Baby clapped his hands with glee and ran inside.

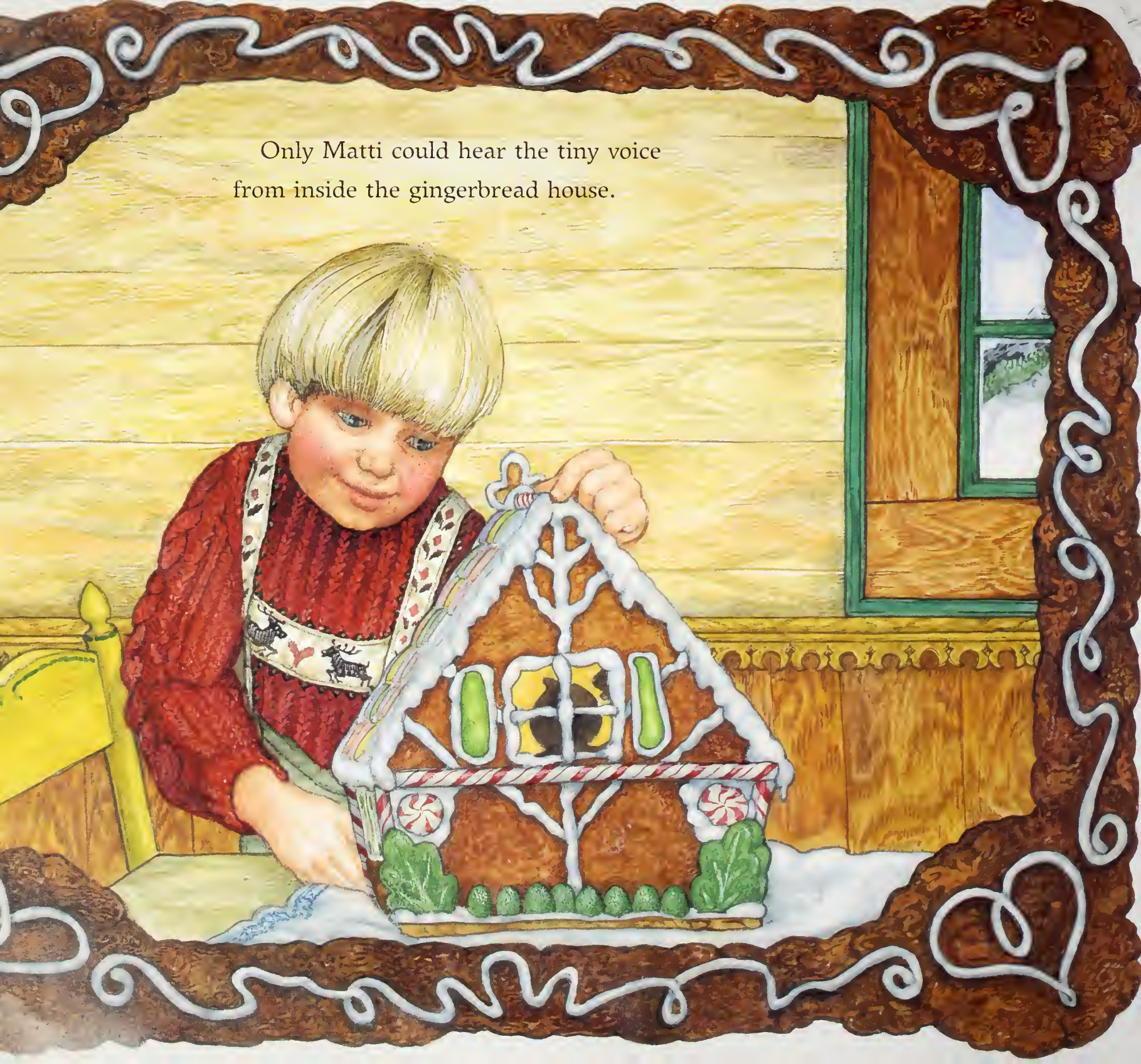
In a tick tock tick, everyone arrived in the clearing, but all they found were a few bits of frosting, a peppermint candy—and some crumbs.

The father exclaimed, "The Gingerbread Baby has finally met his match!"

"I wonder who it was?" the mother said. "Let's go home and tell Matti."

"Hello, Matti," his father said when they got home. "We never did catch that Gingerbread Baby. All we found were some crumbs in the snow."

"I see you have been busy," his mother said, looking at the gingerbread house Matti was holding. "Too bad we never caught that Gingerbread Baby."

"Too bad," said Matti.

Only Matti could hear the tiny voice from inside the gingerbread house.

The Mitten
ADAPTED AND ILLUSTRATED BY JAN BRETT

For Sylvia Kyle, Ruth Ann Johnson,
Rebecca Lim and Tad Beagley

With special thanks to my
Ukrainian friend, Oksana Piaseckyj

The Mitten

A Ukrainian Folktale

Once there was a boy named Nicki who wanted his new mittens made from wool as white as snow.

At first, his grandmother, Baba, did not want to knit white mittens.

"If you drop one in the snow," she warned, "you'll never find it."

But Nicki wanted snow-white mittens, and finally Baba made them.

After she finished she said, "When you come home, first I will look to see if you are safe and sound, but then I will look to see if you still have your snow-white mittens."

So off Nicki went. And it wasn't long until one of his new mittens dropped in the snow and was left behind.

A mole, tired from tunneling along, discovered the mitten and burrowed inside. It was cozy and warm and just the right size, so he decided to stay.

A snowshoe rabbit came hopping by. He stopped for a moment to admire his winter coat. It was then that he saw the mitten, and he wiggled in, feet first. The mole didn't think there was room for both of them, but when he saw the rabbit's big kickers he moved over.

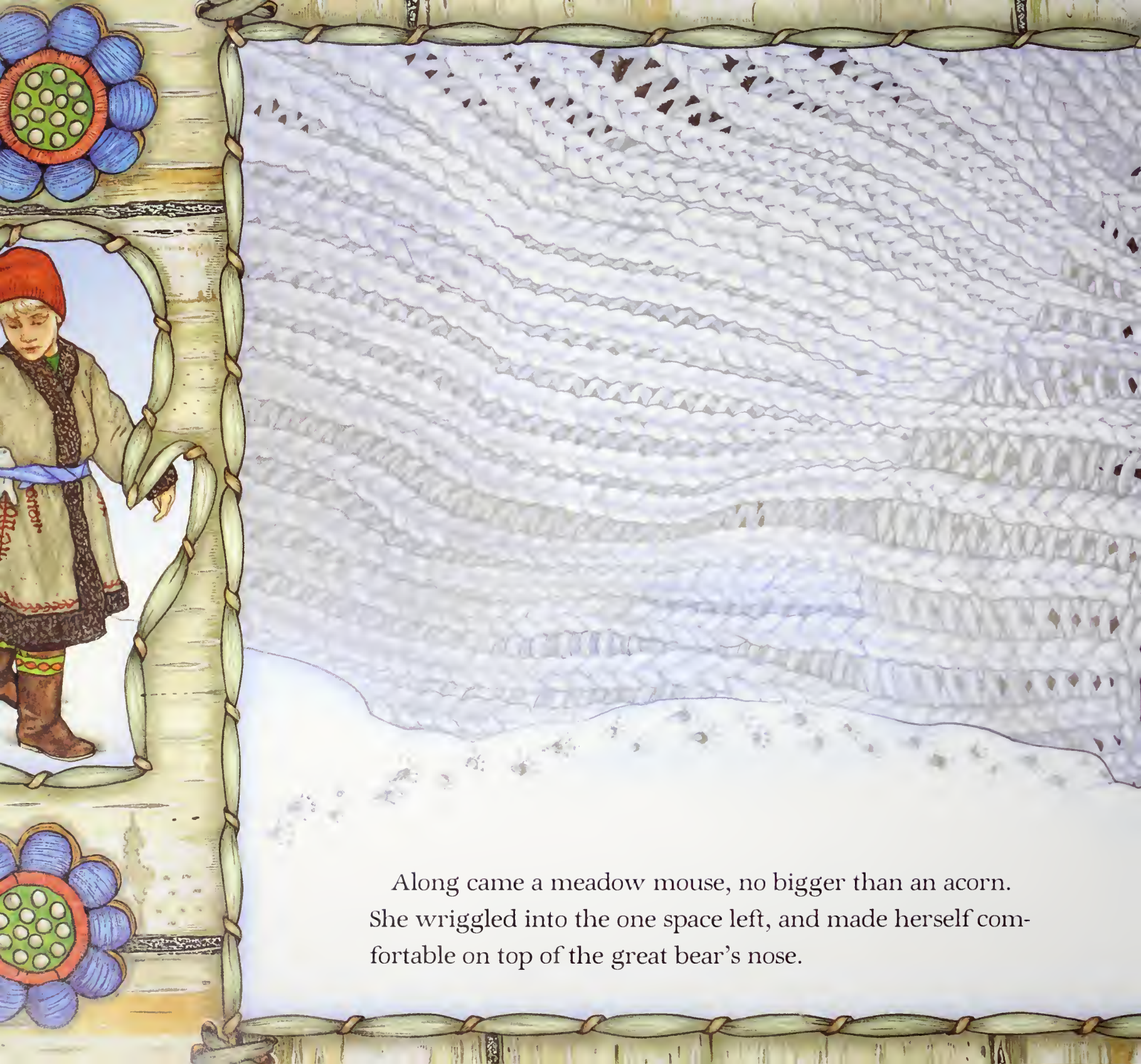
Next a hedgehog came snuffling along. Having spent the day looking under wet leaves for things to eat, he decided to move into the mitten and warm himself. The mole and the rabbit were bumped and jostled, but not being ones to argue with someone covered with prickles, they made room.

As soon as the hedgehog disappeared into the mitten, a big owl, attracted by the commotion, swooped down. When he decided to move in also, the mole, the rabbit, and the hedgehog grumbled. But when they saw the owl's glinty talons, they quickly let him in.

Up through the snow appeared a badger. He eyed the mitten and began to climb in. The mole, the rabbit, the hedgehog, and the owl were not pleased. There was no room left, but when they saw his diggers, they gave him the thumb.

It started snowing, but the animals were snug in the mitten. A waft of warm steam rose in the air, and a fox trotting by stopped to investigate. Just the sight of the cozy mitten made him feel drowsy. The fox poked his muzzle in. When the mole, the rabbit, the hedgehog, the owl, and the badger saw his shiny teeth, they gave the fox lots of room.

A great bear lumbered by. He spied the mitten all plumped up. Not being one to be left out in the cold, he began to nose his way in. The animals were packed in as tightly as could be. But what animal would argue with a bear?

The mitten swelled and stretched. It was pulled and bulged to many times its size. But Baba's good knitting held fast.

Along came a meadow mouse, no bigger than an acorn. She wriggled into the one space left, and made herself comfortable on top of the great bear's nose.

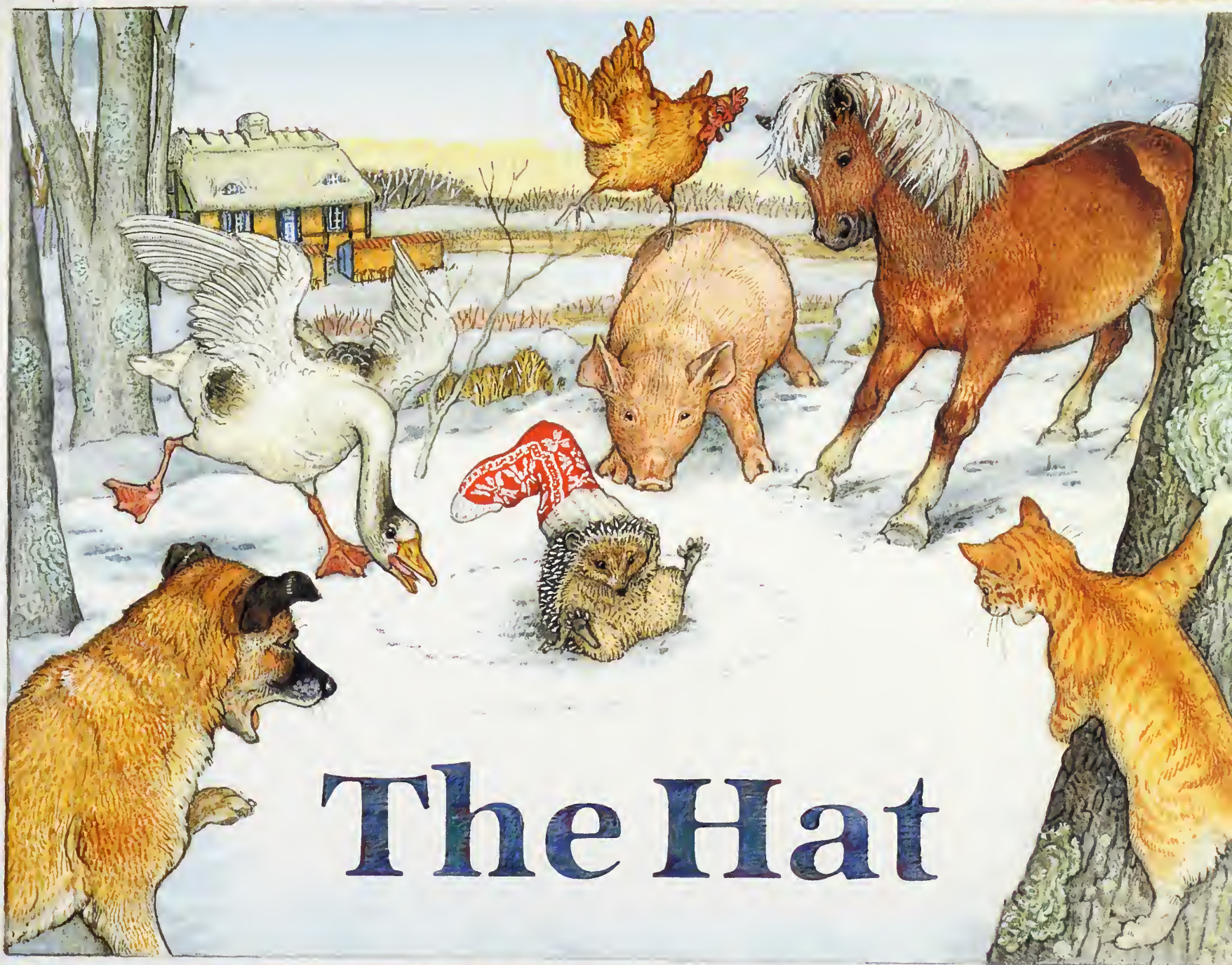
The bear, tickled by the mouse's whiskers, gave an enormous sneeze.

Aaaaa-aaaaa-aaaaa-ca-chew!

The force of the sneeze shot the mitten up into the sky, and scattered the animals in all directions.

On his way home, Nicki saw a white shape in the distance. It was the lost mitten silhouetted against the blue sky.

As he ran to catch his snow-white mitten, he saw Baba's face in the window. First she looked to see if he was safe and sound, and then she saw that he still had his new mittens.

JAN BRETT

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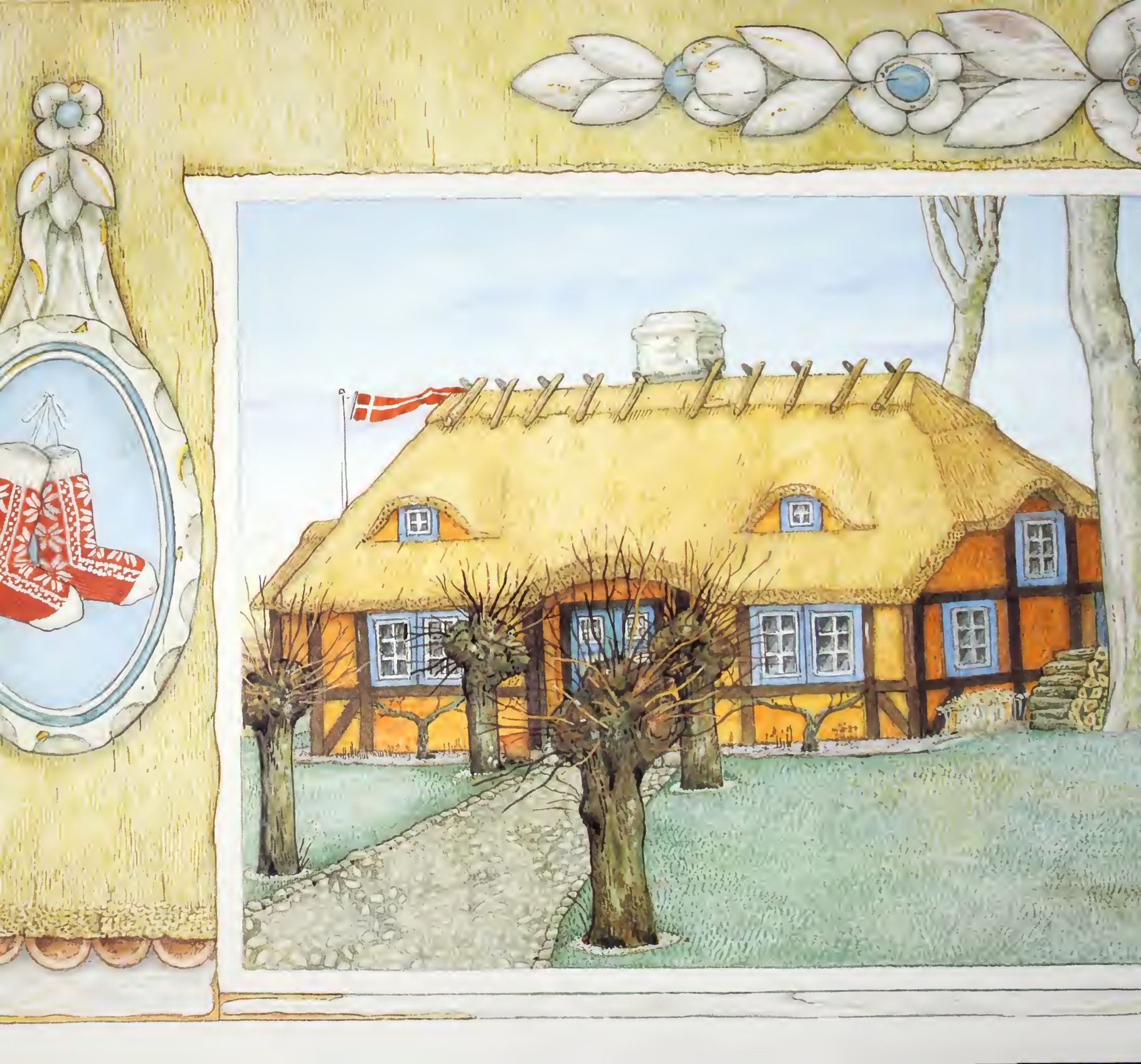
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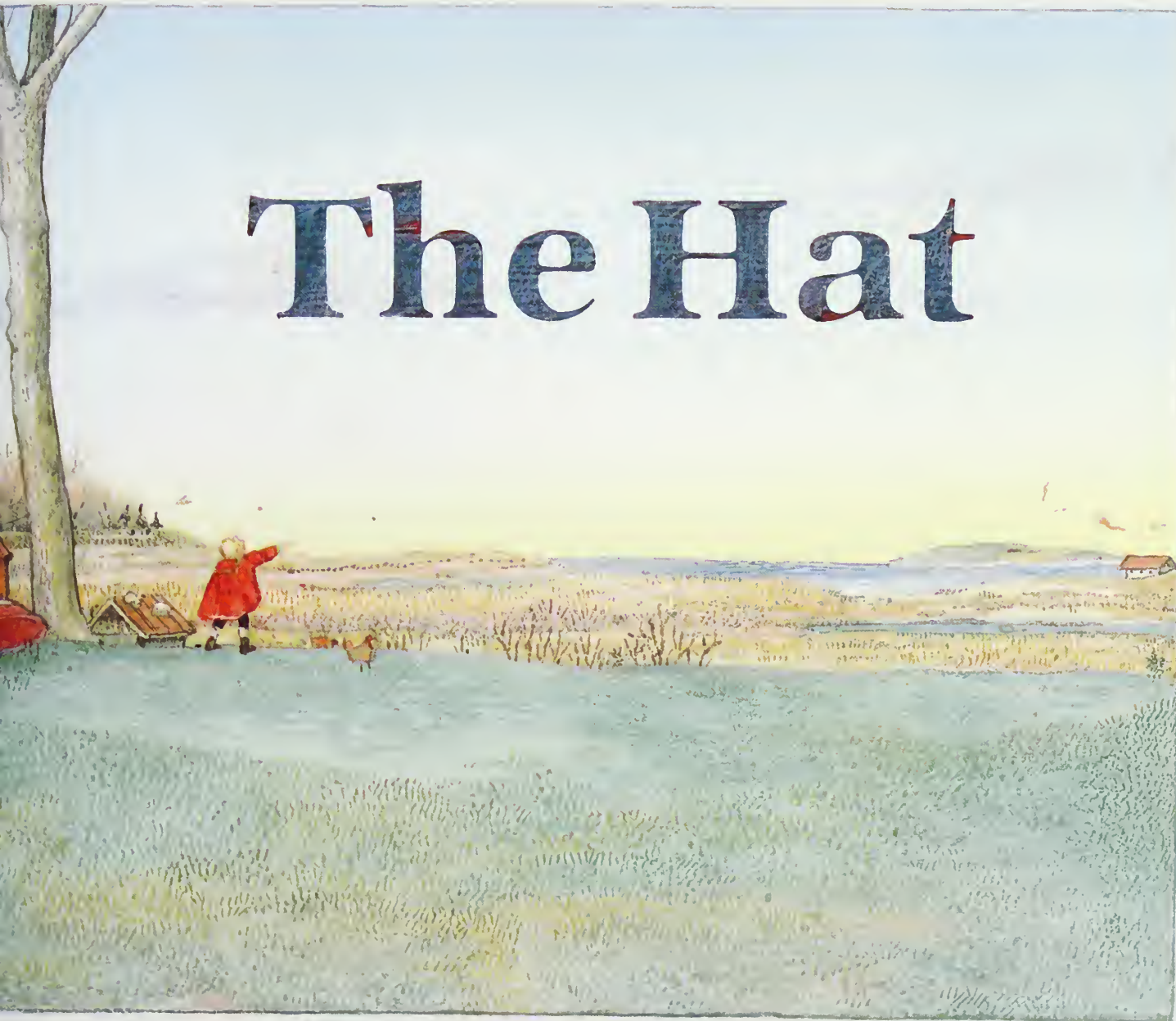
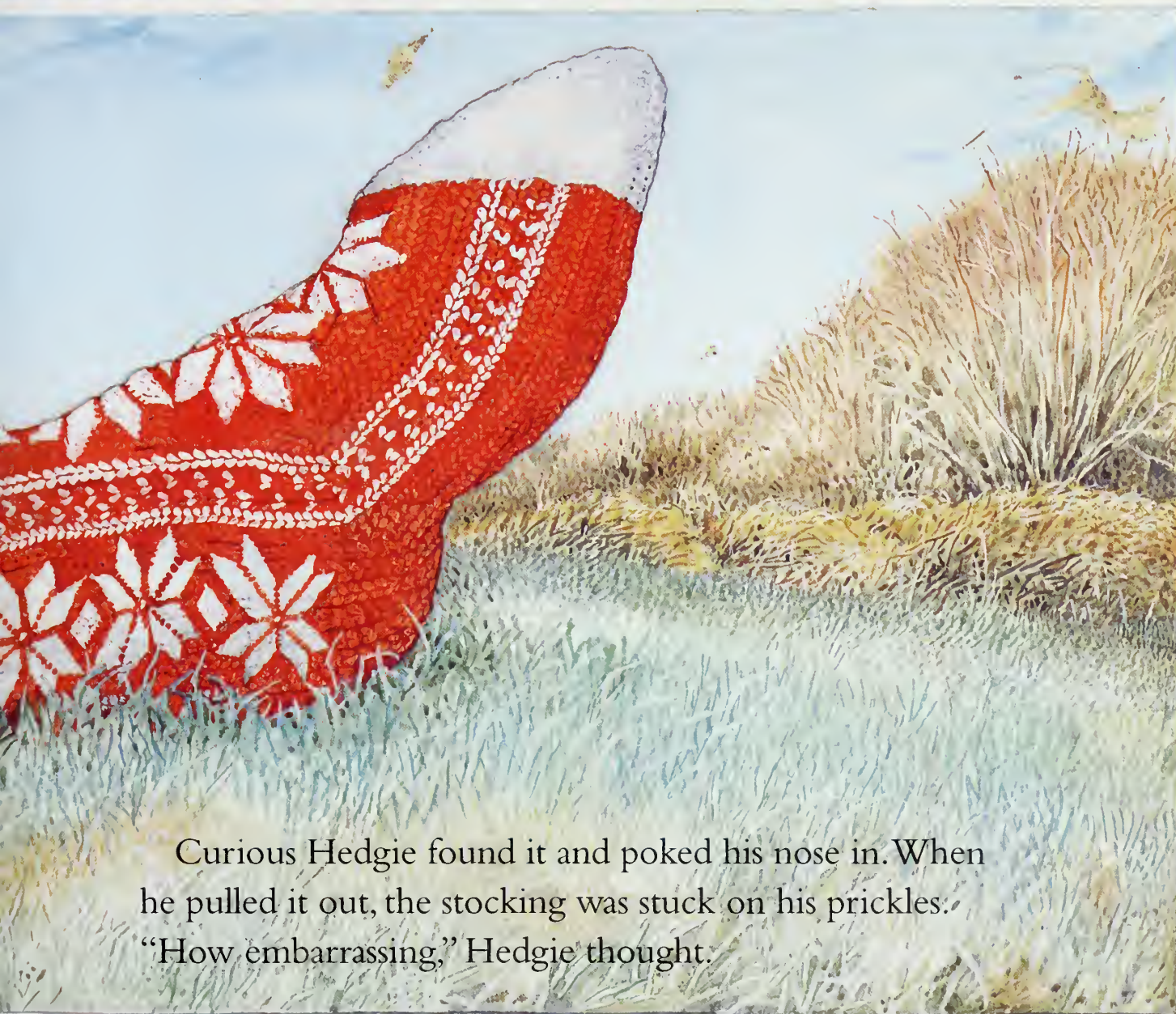

For Sara and Joshua Carty

Winter was on the way. Lisa took her woolen clothes out of the chest and carried them outside.

She was hanging them up in the fresh air, when a strong wind blew one of her stockings off the line.

Curious Hedgie found it and poked his nose in. When he pulled it out, the stocking was stuck on his prickles. "How embarrassing," Hedgie thought.

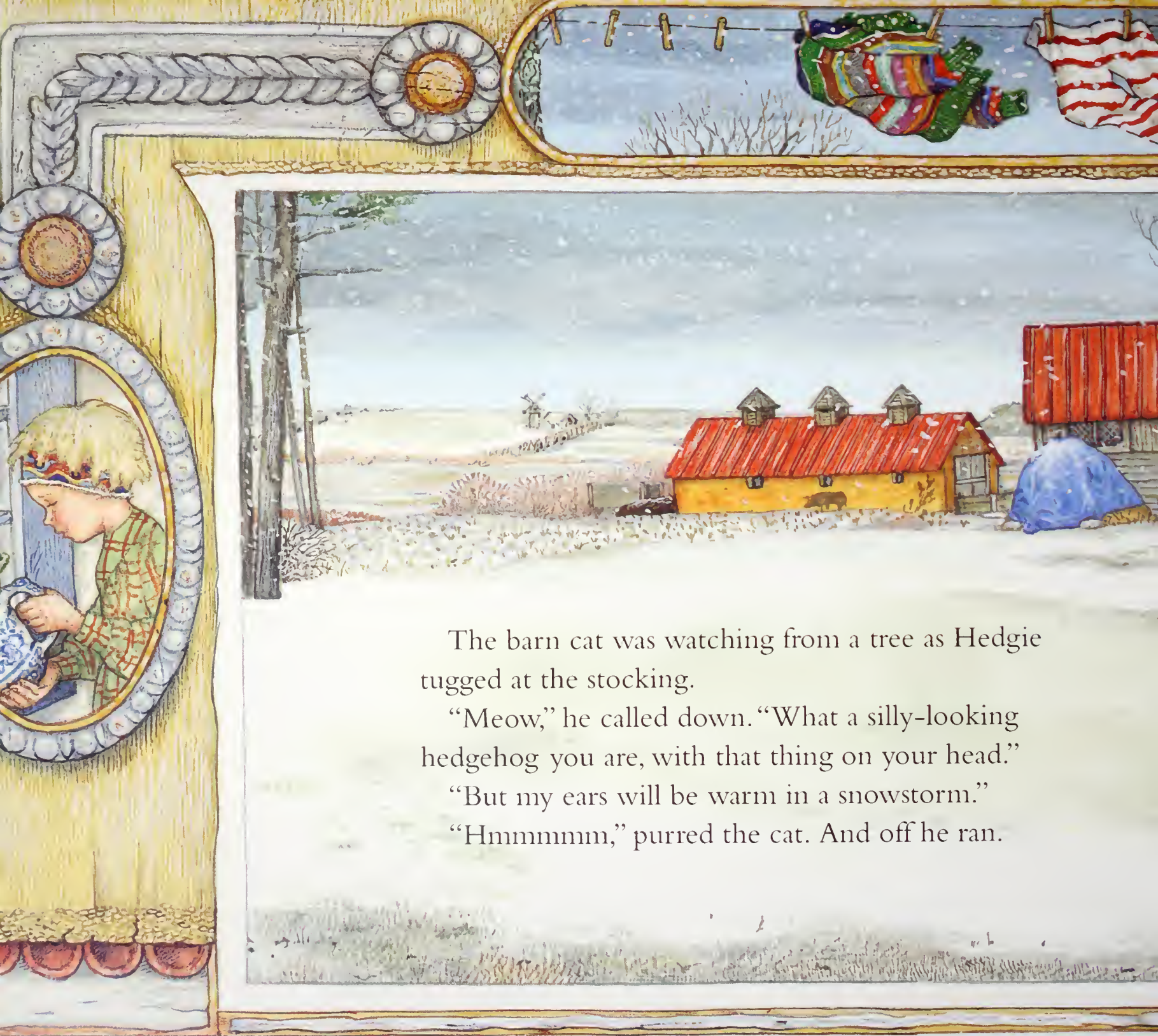
The mother hen came by with her chicks. "Cackle, cackle," she clucked, and laughed. "What's that on your head, Hedgie?"

"Why, it's my new hat," he told her. "Isn't it beautiful?"
The mother hen cocked her head as if she had an idea. And off she ran.

Hedgie saw the noisy gander looking down at him.

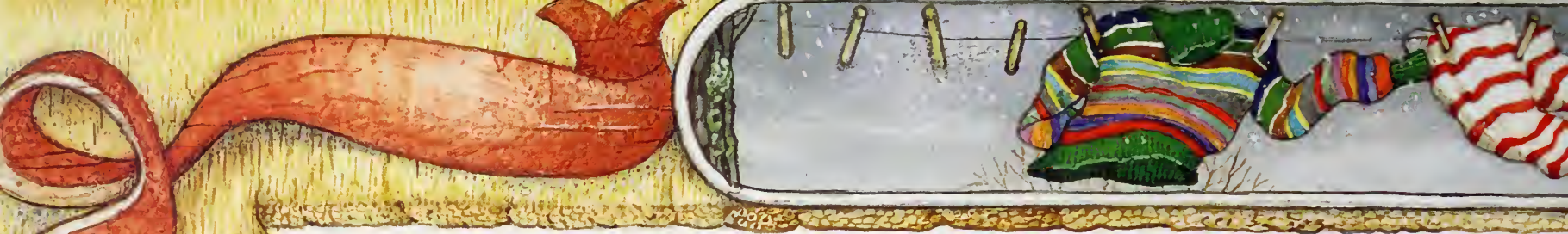
"Honk, honk! Ho, ho, ho!" the gander laughed. "Look at that! The hedgehog has flipped his gizzard."

"Laugh today, Gander. But tomorrow when it rains, my hat will keep me dry."

The gander thought for a moment. And off he ran.

The barn cat was watching from a tree as Hedgie tugged at the stocking.

"Meow," he called down. "What a silly-looking hedgehog you are, with that thing on your head."

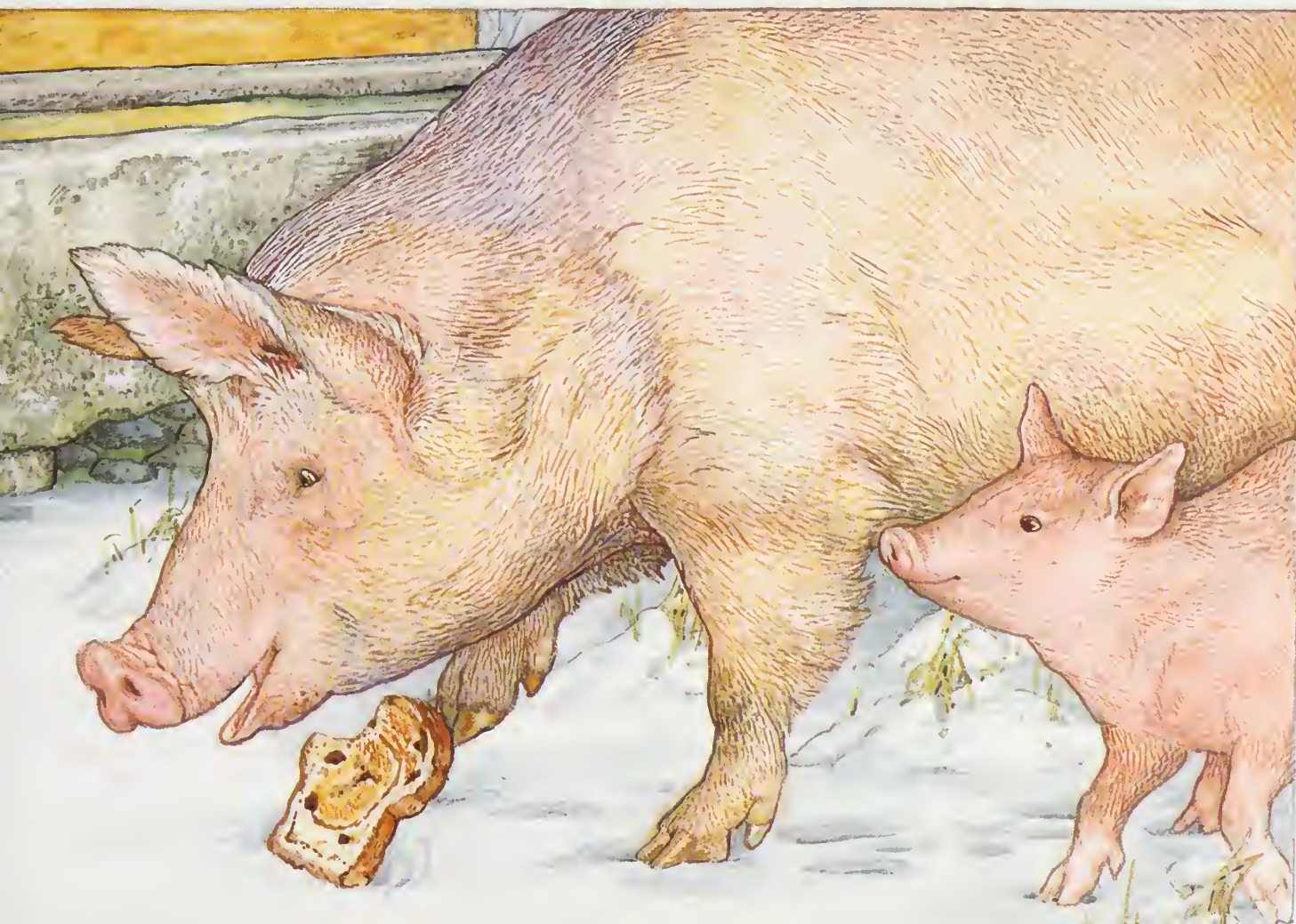
"But my ears will be warm in a snowstorm."

"Hmmmmm," purred the cat. And off he ran.

The farm dog and her puppies found Hedgie in a patch of brambles.

"Hedgie, is that a hat you're wearing? How funny you look," she barked, and her puppies yelped and giggled.

“But I’ll be cozy and dry when it snows,” Hedgie said.

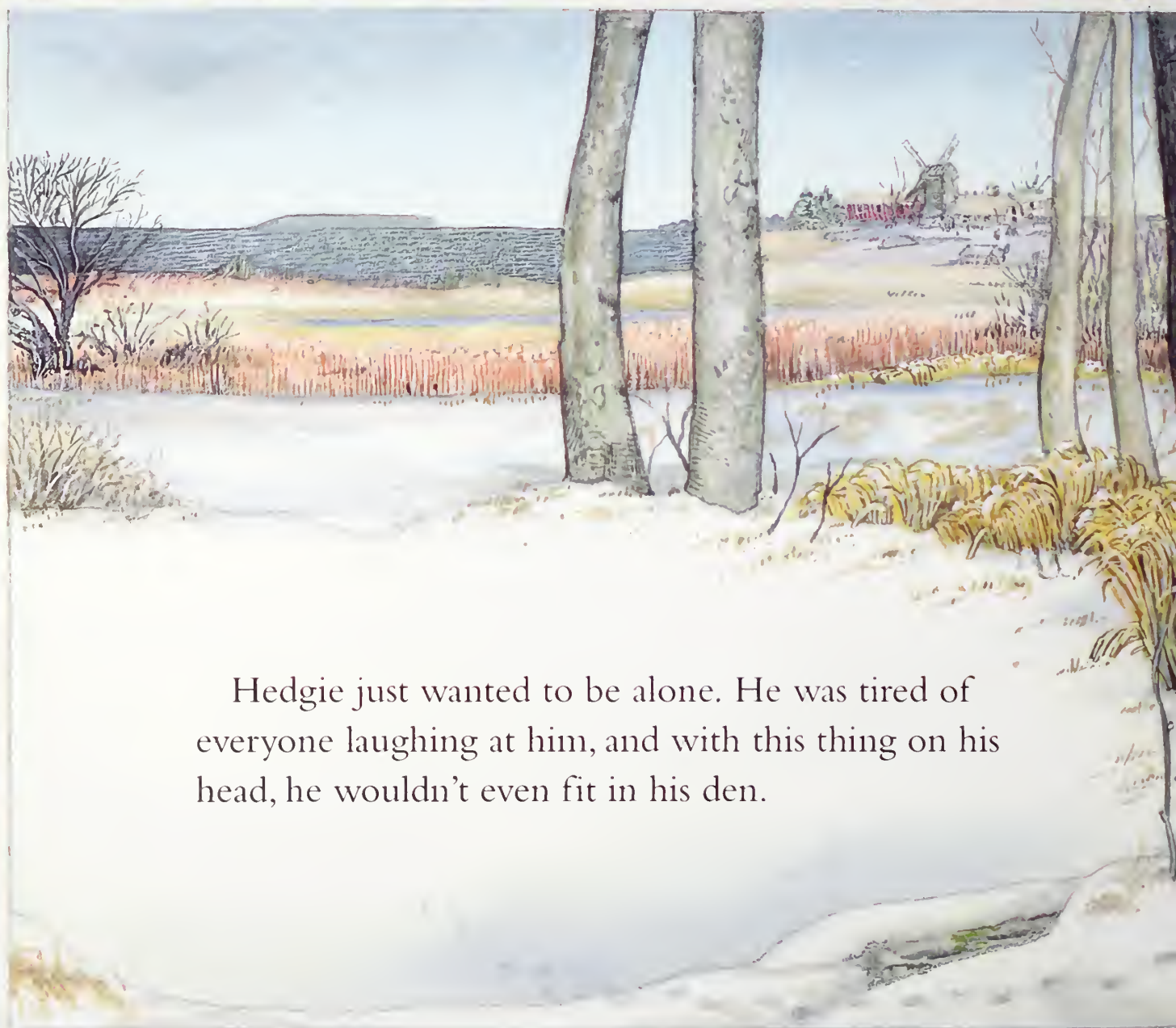
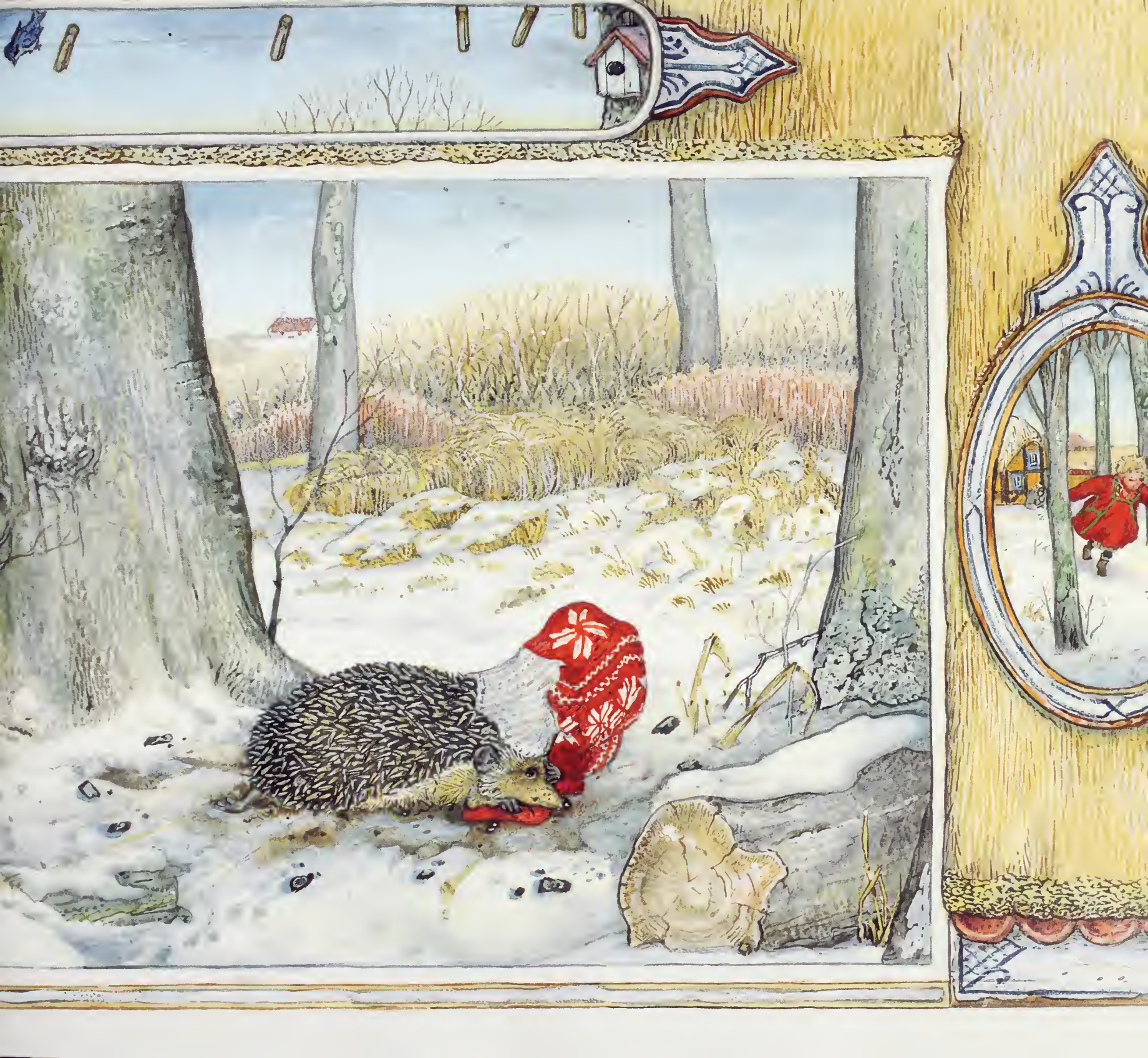
The farm dog’s ears perked up. And off she ran.

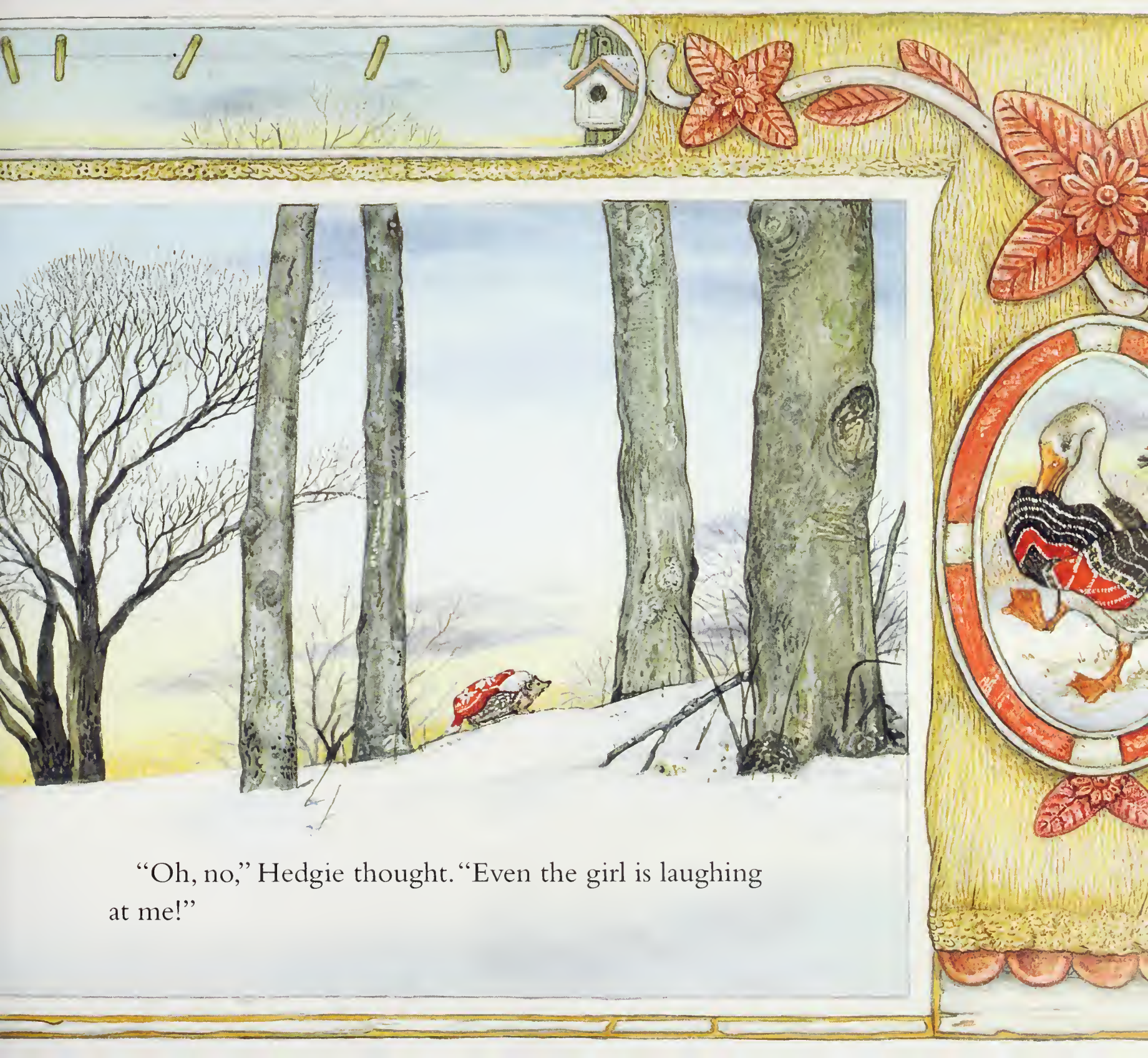
“Oink, oink!” the piglets squealed.
“What are you up to, Hedgie?” the mama pig asked.

"Making sure my hat doesn't fall off if an icy wind blows up."

"I see," said the mama pig. And off she ran.

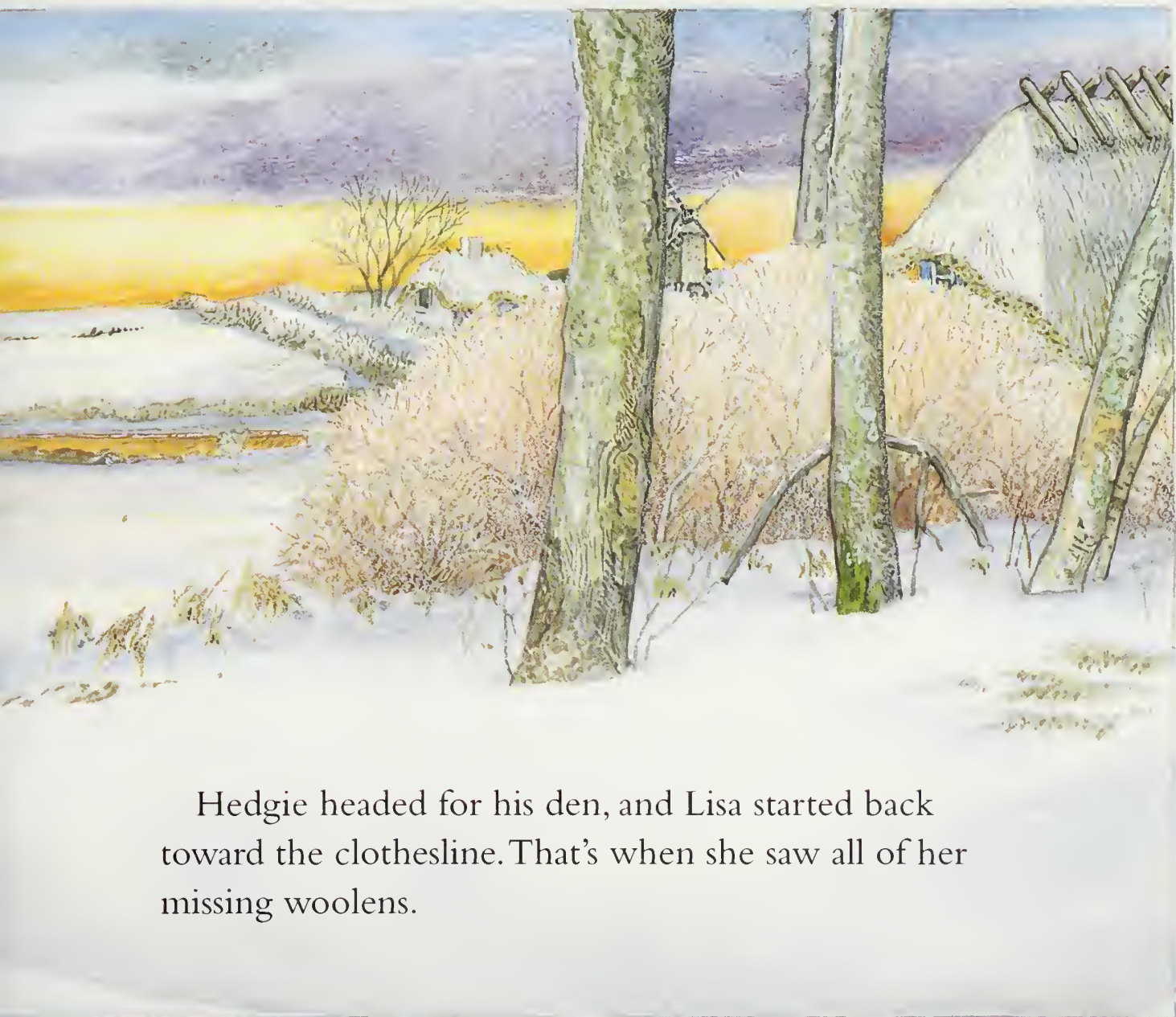
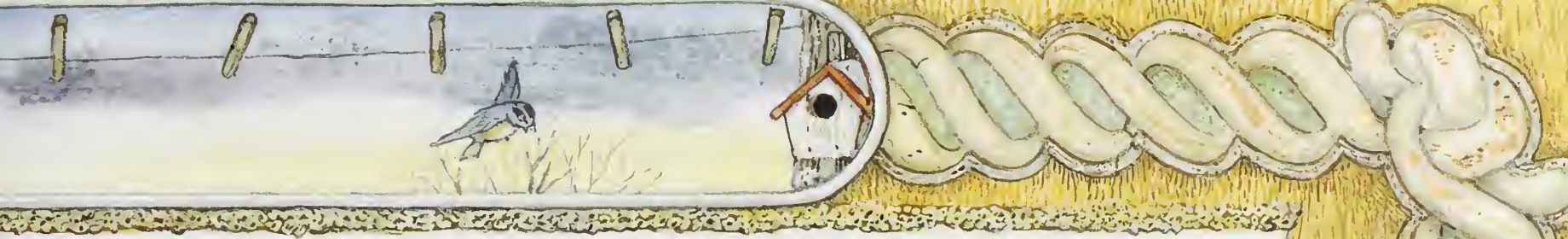
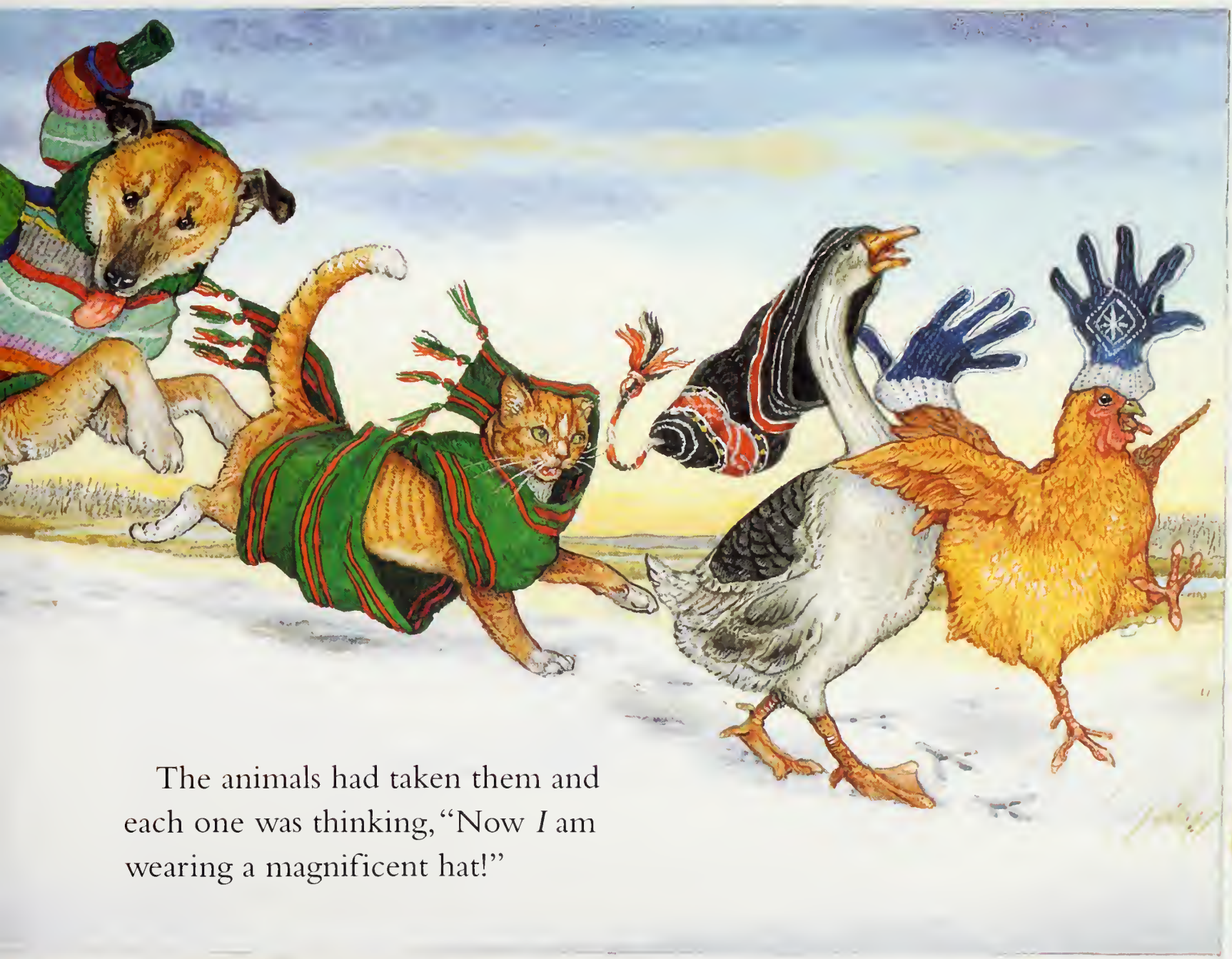
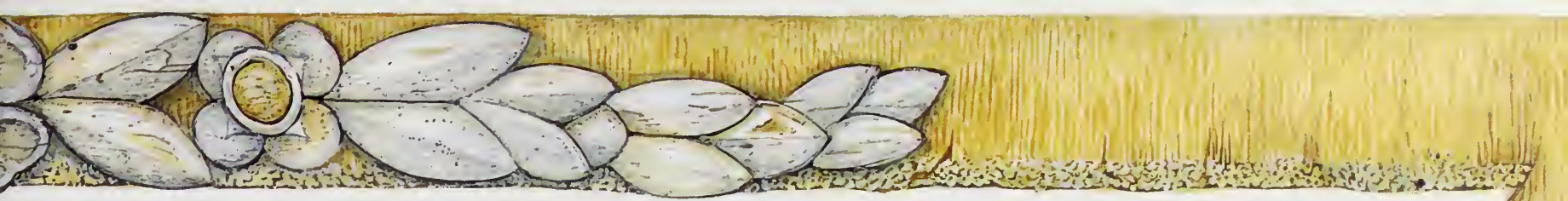
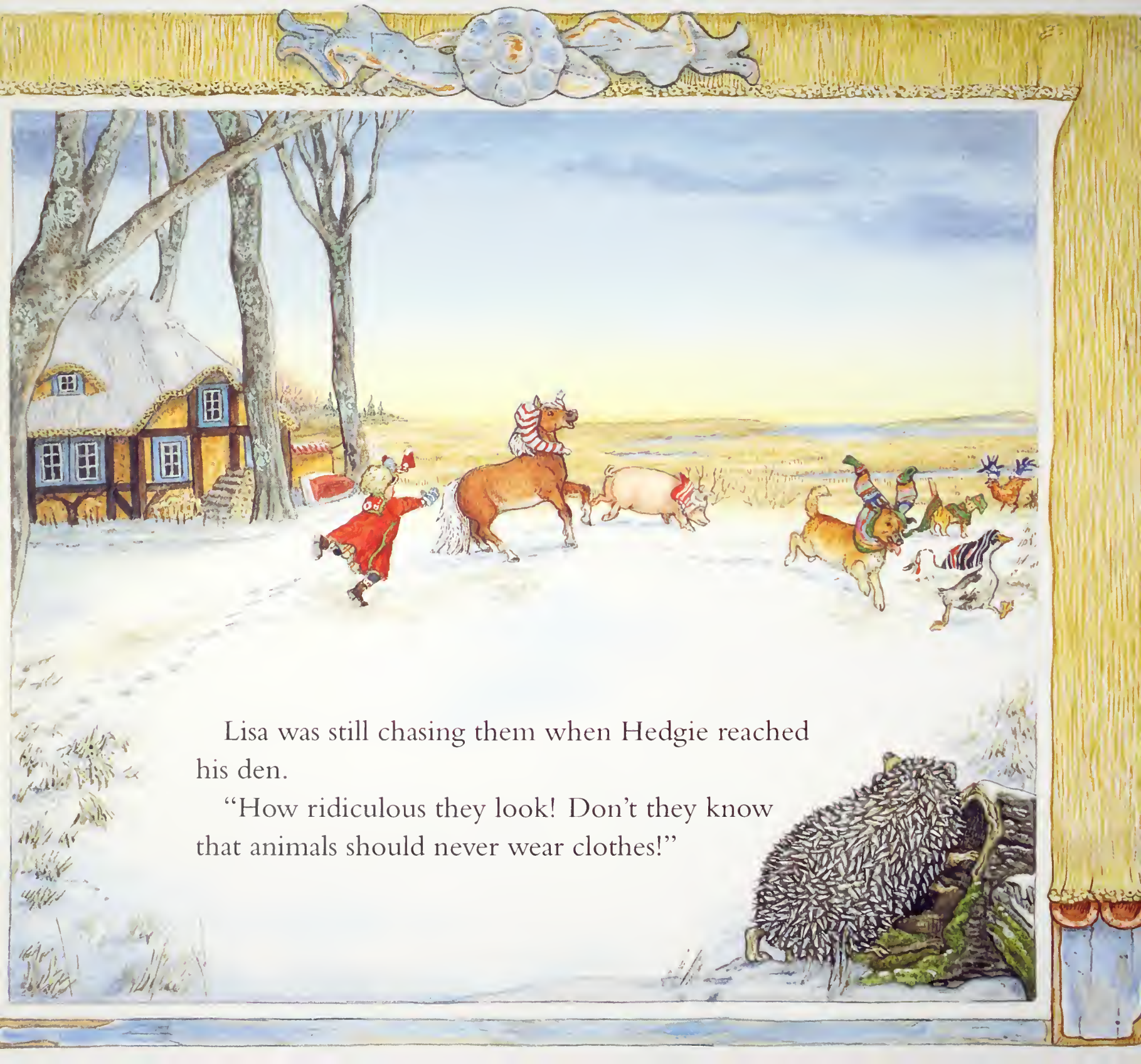
"Hedgie, what is that ridiculous thing on your head?" the pony snorted at Hedgie. That was the last straw.

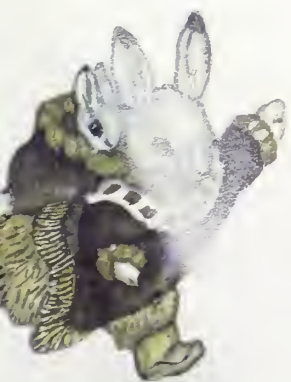
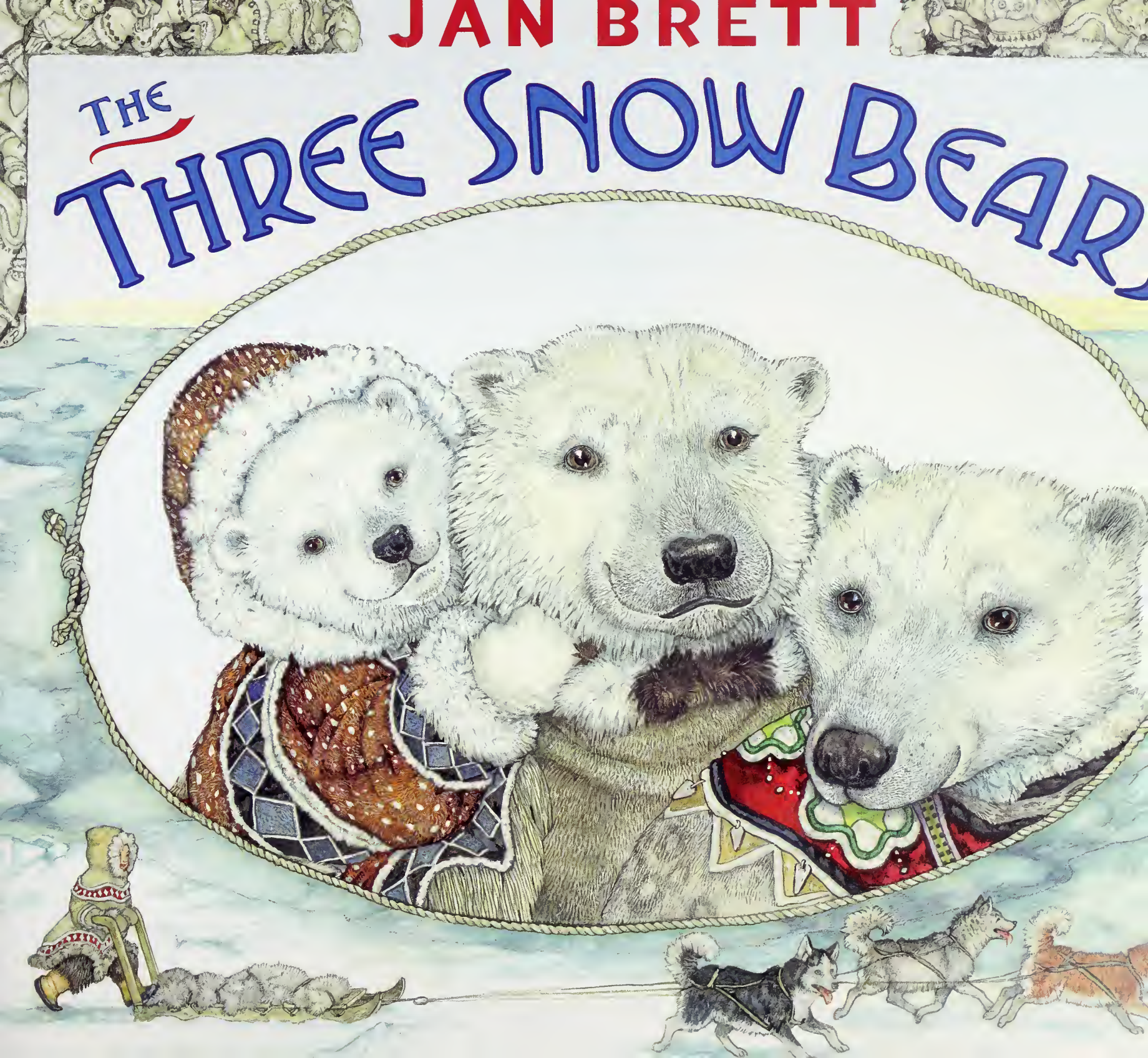
"It's my hat, of course. Don't you know that everyone should wear a hat in winter when it's cold and snowy!" Hedgie shouted.

The pony looked startled. Hedgie was usually so friendly. And off he ran.

Hedgie just wanted to be alone. He was tired of everyone laughing at him, and with this thing on his head, he wouldn't even fit in his den.

He didn't see Lisa running after him, the other stocking in her hand.

"Come back, you silly hedgehog," she called.

"Oh, no," Hedgie thought. "Even the girl is laughing at me!"

Lisa caught up and pulled her stocking off Hedgie's head.

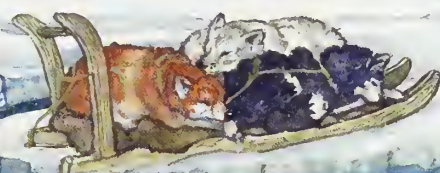
"You ridiculous little hedgehog," she laughed. "Don't you know that animals don't wear clothes!"

Hedgie headed for his den, and Lisa started back toward the clothesline. That's when she saw all of her missing woolens.

The animals had taken them and each one was thinking, "Now *I* am wearing a magnificent hat!"

Lisa was still chasing them when Hedgie reached his den.

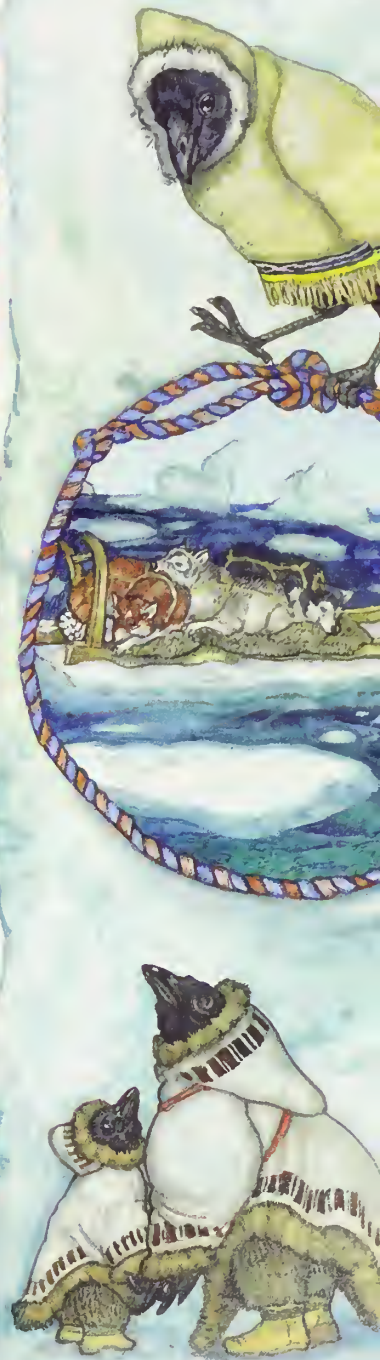
"How ridiculous they look! Don't they know that animals should never wear clothes!"

JAN BRETT
THE THREE SNOW BEAR

For Katie

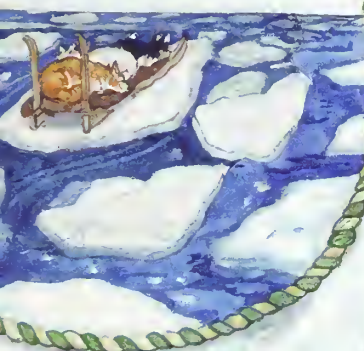
With thanks to the Brookfield Zoo

THE THREE SNOW BEARS

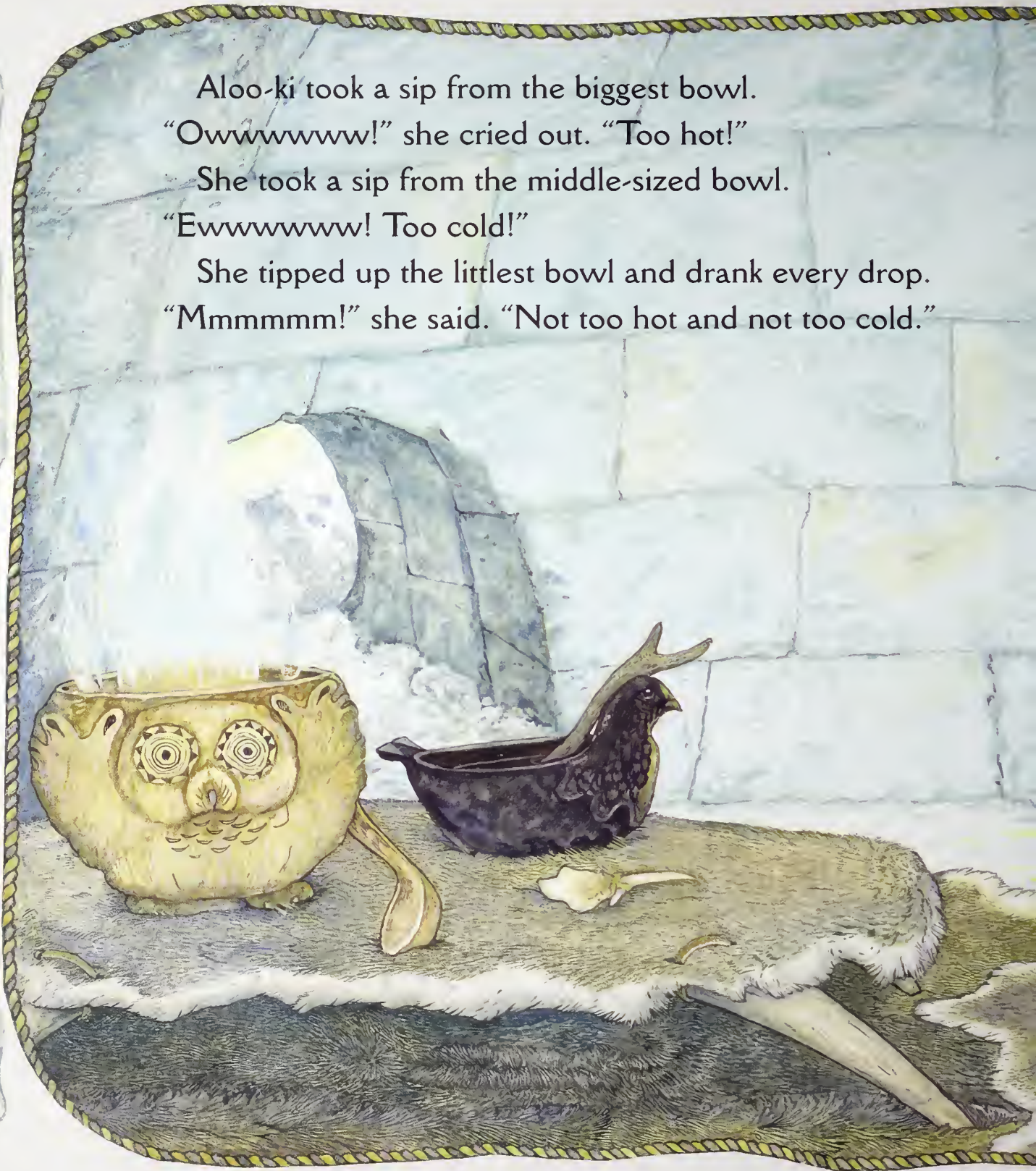
"Come back!" Aloo-ki shouted as her huskies floated out to sea. *Oh, no!* She knew that although an ice floe is a good place to fish, it is a bad place to lose a dog team.

Not far away a snow bear family had just started to eat their breakfast. But it was way too hot for Baby Bear.

"Ow-ee!" yowled Baby Bear. "My breakfast burned my mouth."

"We'll go for a stroll and let the soup cool," Mama Bear said.

Aloo-ki was running along looking for her dogs when she came upon the biggest igloo she had ever seen.

Who lives here? she wondered.

Aloo-ki ducked inside. Right away, she smelled something delicious.

Across the room, she saw a big bowl, a middle-sized bowl, and a small bowl. Surely the good smell was coming from the three bowls.

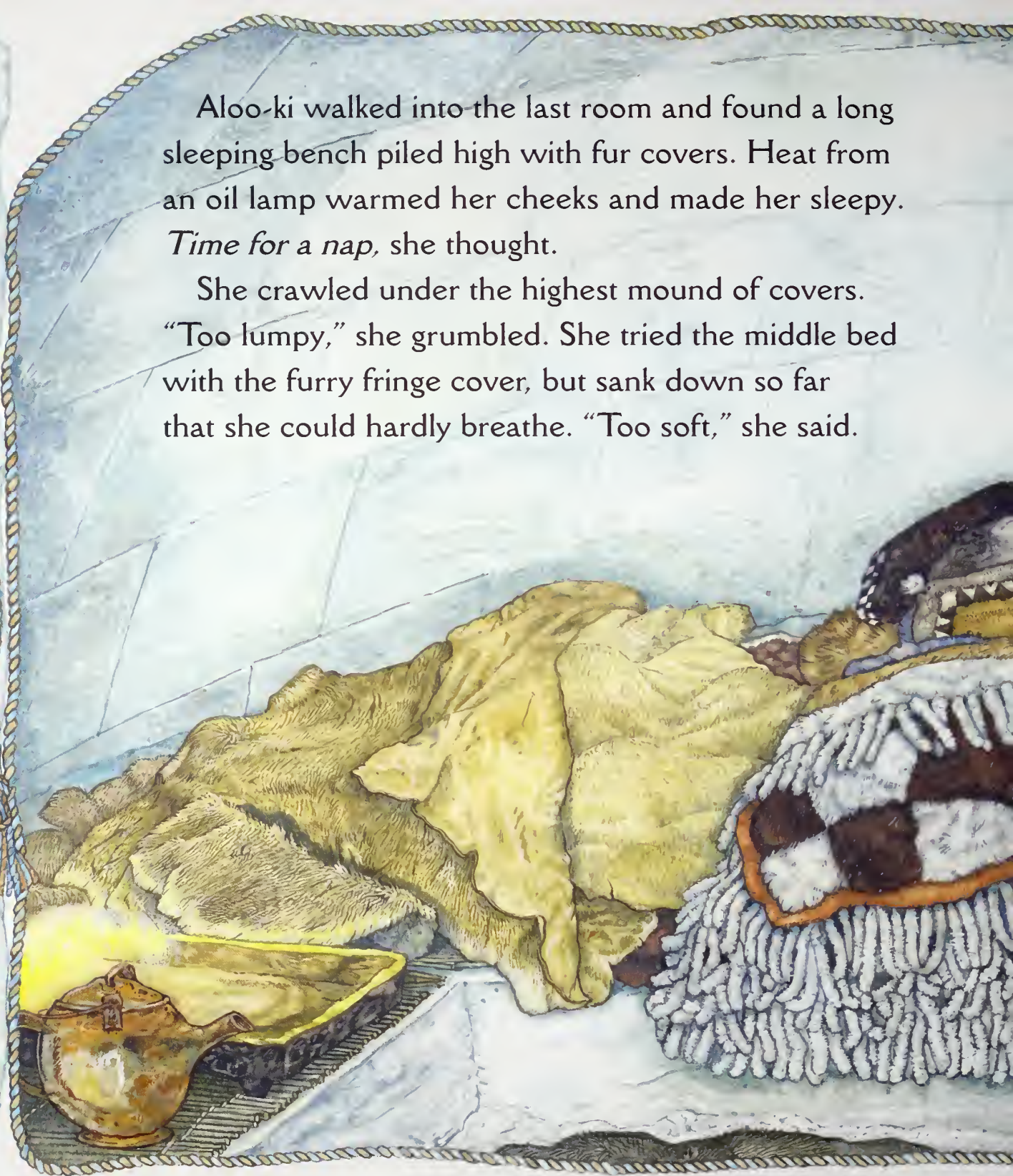
Aloo-ki took a sip from the biggest bowl.
"Owwwwwww!" she cried out. "Too hot!"
She took a sip from the middle-sized bowl.
"Ewwwwwww! Too cold!"
She tipped up the littlest bowl and drank every drop.
"Mmmmmm!" she said. "Not too hot and not too cold."

In the next room Aloo-ki spotted three pairs of beautiful boots standing in a row.

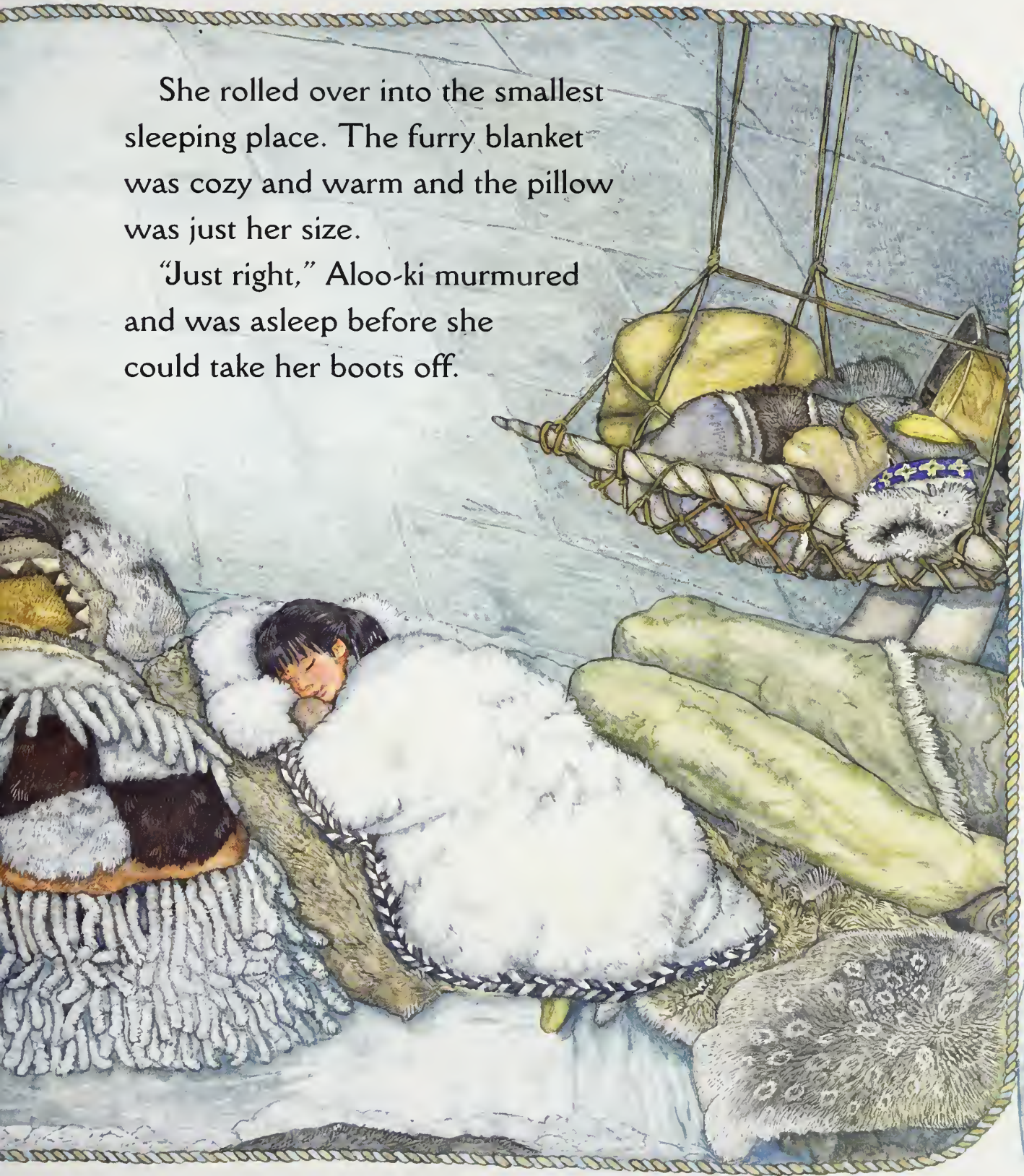
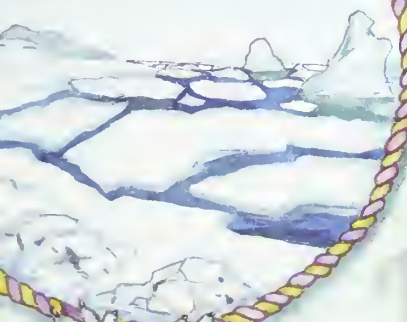
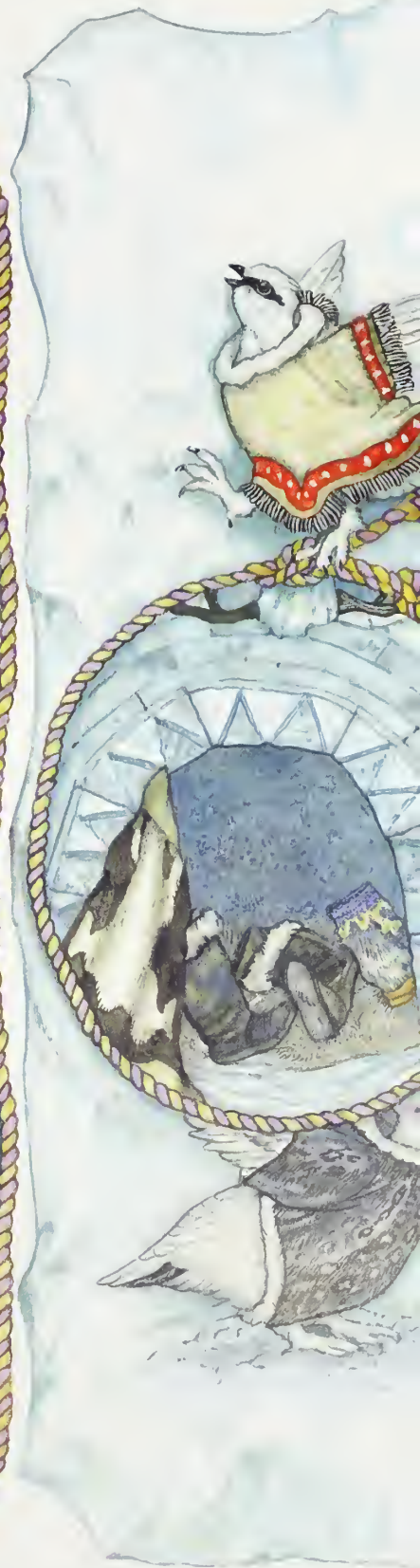
She put on the biggest boot. "Too big!" she said.

She put on the middle-sized boot. "Too fancy!" she said.

She put on the littlest pair. "Just right!" she said, wiggling her toes in the soft fur lining.

Aloo-ki walked into the last room and found a long sleeping bench piled high with fur covers. Heat from an oil lamp warmed her cheeks and made her sleepy. *Time for a nap,* she thought.

She crawled under the highest mound of covers. "Too lumpy," she grumbled. She tried the middle bed with the furry fringe cover, but sank down so far that she could hardly breathe. "Too soft," she said.

She rolled over into the smallest sleeping place. The furry blanket was cozy and warm and the pillow was just her size.

"Just right," Aloo-ki murmured and was asleep before she could take her boots off.

If Aloo-ki hadn't fallen fast asleep, she might have heard her dogs barking happily.

Papa Bear, Mama Bear, and Baby Bear had spotted them adrift in the strong current and gone out to save them. The snow bear family was pushing Aloo-ki's dog team back toward their igloo and safety.

Papa Bear crawled into the igloo and saw his big bowl sitting in a pool of spilled soup. "Someone has been tasting my soup!" he roared.

Mama Bear rushed in and saw that her soup had been sloshed around too. "Someone has been sipping my soup," she growled.

"Someone found my soup!" sputtered Baby Bear in her high, squeaky voice. "And they ate it all up!"

Papa Bear ran into the next room and saw his boots in the middle of the floor. "Someone has been trying on my boots," he boomed in his big bear voice.

Mama Bear put on her fancy boots. "Someone has had these boots on," she huffed, "and the fur is all bunched up."

Baby Bear saw that her boots had disappeared. "Someone has taken my boots and left behind these not as good ones!" she wailed.

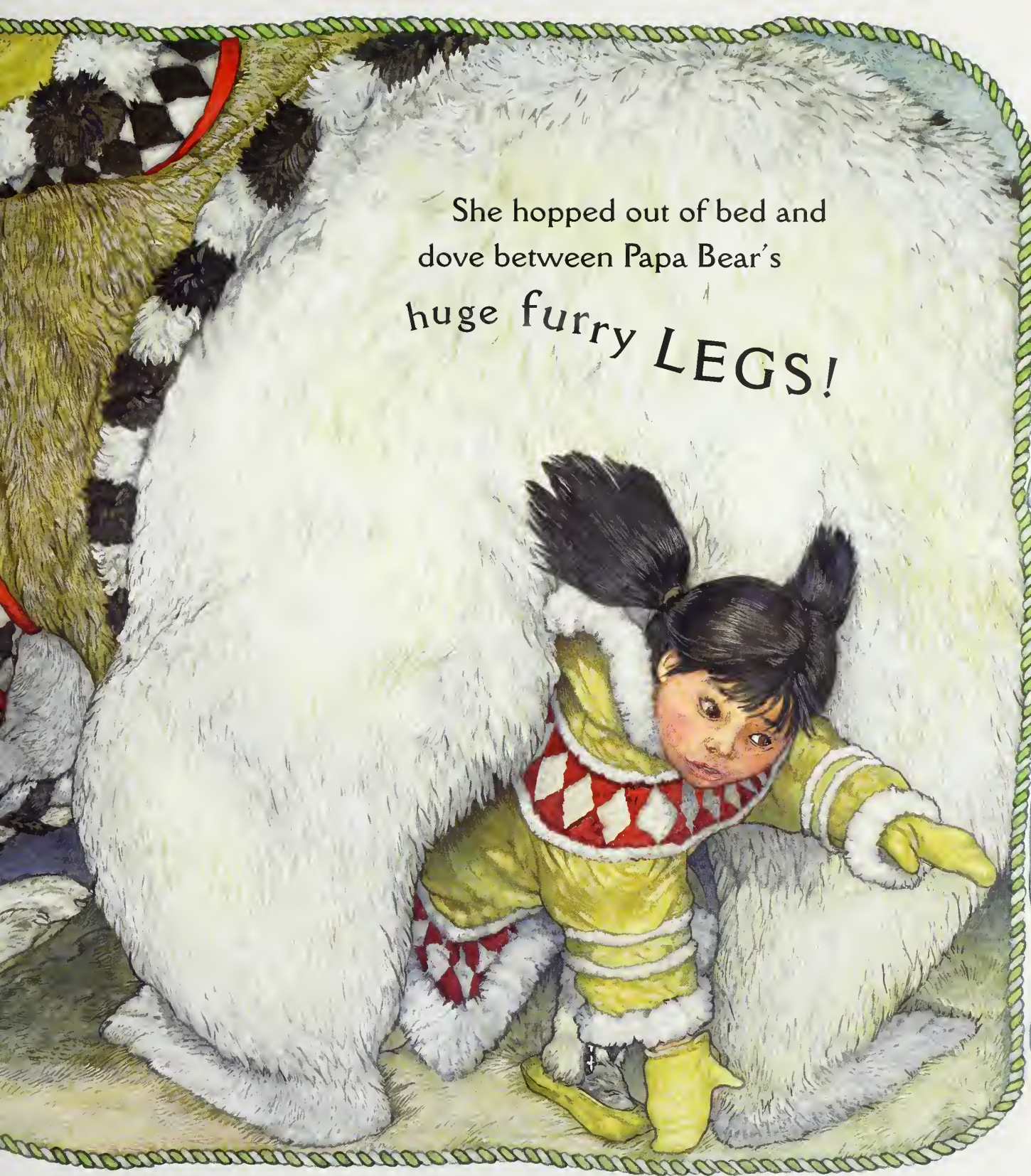
The bears ran into their bedroom.

"Someone has been sleeping in my bed!" Papa Bear bellowed.

"Someone has been sleeping in my bed too!" Mama Bear cried.

Baby Bear peeked at her little bed and squeaked, "Someone has been sleeping in my bed, and here she is!"

Aloo-ki opened her eyes and saw three bear noses only inches away.

She hopped out of bed and
dove between Papa Bear's
huge furry LEGS!

Quicker than a seal, Aloo-ki ran from room to room until she burst outside.

Her huskies bounced around, barking and smiling their doggy grins.

Aloo-ki and her dogs flew over the frozen ice, dodging ridges and cracks. She looked back to wave a thank-you to the snow bears.

She couldn't see them, but she heard a big gruff voice, a middle-sized voice, and a high, squeaky voice calling to her . . .

Bye-bye!
Bye-bye!
Bye-bye!

GINGERBREAD BABY

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